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THE COAST OF AMALFI



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Amalfi

ART

HISTORY

NATURE

THE COAST OF AMALFI



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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Apennine spur stretching between Positano and Salerno gives rise to a very jagged coastline which does not allow for the construction of large towns. Only at the end of certain ravines do the cliffs taper off and form beaches by detritic accumulation caused by streams flowing into the sea. Despite the ruggedness of this landscape, traces of prehistoric settlements do exist. The archaeological finds in the upper strata of the grotto at La Porta near Positano date back to the Mesolithic age (approximately 8,500 years ago) while those in the lower strata can be traced to the so-called Romanelli culture of the Upper Paleolithic age (approximately 11,000 years ago).

There is no evidence of established settlements along the coastline from that period until Roman times, although the neighbouring areas to the north and south were home to various peoples on a sporadic basis. In late Bronze age mythology the islands opposite Positano, nowadays known as "Li Galli", were believed to be home to the Sirens. In this small archipelago, ancient Aegean sailors imagined the outlines of the bodies of the three Sirens, *Ligea*, *Leucosia* and *Partenope*, who had committed suicide when Odiseus did not fall for their enchanting song. This episode, which was recounted by Homer, shows that Aegean sailors were aware of the dangers in this area and how this fear was passed down by oral tradition, personifying danger as hostile divinities.

From the 15th century B.C. onwards, this part of the coastline became an obligatory crossroads for Aegean sailors who had set up business activities in the Campania region (Paestum, Polla, Sala Consilina, Ischia, Vivara). These people were actually Bronze Age Greeks known



a s
"Achaeans"
who scholars incorrectly termed Mycenaeans (after the name of their largest city). The Mycenaean presence in the south of Italy is sometimes referred to as the "pre-colonisation" of the area in that it predated the real "colonisation" by the Greeks.

From the 8th century B.C. onwards, the

Campania coastline was a meeting point and at times a battleground for the different cultural groups that had settled there. Archaeologists have documented the presence of these cultures by their funeral rites.

In the northernmost part of the coast, the indigenous people, who were Oscan in origin, favoured burial (as testified by the Vadabillo necropolis near Massa Lubrense and the Sarno plain)

was present on the coast. Not only was the Greek influence felt by the local populations but so too was that of the Etruscans who, by the second half of the 6th century B.C., had already established many settlements in the Campania region.

Although the coastline was perhaps not under the exclusive control of any one of these peoples, it constituted a rocky and inhospitable demarcation line between two highly sought-after plains: one located at the mouth of the river Sarno to the north and the other at the mouth of the river Sele to the south. But the Etruscan influence was destined to

wane in the light of Hellenic expansion, and the battle of Cumae in 474 B.C.

marked the end of their thassalocracy. After the Greeks it was the peoples from the Apennines

(Samnites and Lucans) who predominated: Sorrento surrendered to the enemy at the end of the 5th century B.C. and Poseidonia, which later became Pais-

tom, surrendered at the end of the following century.

The conflict between the Samnites and the increasingly strong Romans led to the latter settling permanently in Campania.

In the year 268 B.C. the Romans deported the rebellious Picentes to the area which corresponds to the modern-day province of Salerno. Once the property of the Lucans, this land was home to the cities of Eburnum (Eboli), Salernum (Salerno) and Picentia (Pontecagnano). The latter, which was the largest of the cities, gave its name to the province. The Romans were the first to recognise that the coastline was not only a mandatory maritime crossroads, but that it had potential as a highly sought-after place to live where

while in the south the "Villanovian" settlements cremated their dead (Fratte near Salerno, Pontecagnano, Capodifiume).

If the Etruscan town of "Marchina" actually does correspond to present-day Vietri-sul-Mare, the Villanovian settlements would have constituted the outer fringes of an Etruscan element which



the aristocracy could idle their time away in luxury. Thus, some time around the 1st century A.D. sumptuous villas were constructed in Positano, the "Li Galli" islands and Minori. The ruins of these dwellings, as well as the sarcophaguses, urns and marble relics uncovered along the coastal and mountain areas, would seem to indicate that important members of the patriciate once lived here. It appears that either slaves or freedmen and women were the first to work the land next to their masters' houses and successfully reclaim small areas of arable land from the once barren rocky countryside.

After Tiberius' demise, Capri was no longer in vogue with the Roman nobility: indeed, it became an outpost for confining convicts or suspected criminals. The increasing lack of interest in these coastal properties ultimately led to their

decline and ruin, to which the famous eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. also contributed.

In the 5th century A.D. the Barbarian invasions in Campania caused many people to seek refuge in the inhospitable but safe recesses of the coastline. Consequently, the population of the coastal towns grew and an environment where "latinitas", or a civilisation governed by Roman laws, still flourished. Later on, Campania was to become the backdrop for the final battle between the Goths and the Byzantines for the dominion of Italy (553 A.D.).

The Byzantine victory was short-lived as a few years later they were forced to bid a hasty retreat when they came face to face with the Lombards (568 A.D.).

However, they did manage to hold on to certain areas, including the land between the Gulfs of Gaeta and Salerno,



with Naples as the administrative and military base. The city of Salerno itself remained firmly in the hands of the Lombards and acted as the natural strategic base from which to combat the growing power of maritime towns such as Amalfi and Sorrento, which still depended on Byzantium. This dependence, which was more formal than substantial, gradually came to an end as Sorrento declared itself a free dukedom and Amalfi grew to acquire the status of maritime republic.

With their strong sea-faring skills and acute business sense, the Amalfi people succeeded in re-establishing links between the east and the west via the stretch of water which, though once familiar to the local people and affectionately referred to as "mare nostrum", had become treacherous due to Saracen incursions.

The political and military chessboard that was the south of Italy - a precarious balance of power-sharing between the Lombards, Byzantines and Arabs - was upset once and for all in the 11th century by a new race of people from northern Europe: the Normans.

By the first half of the 12th century, Naples, Amalfi and Sorrento had lost their independent status and had become part of a vast kingdom encompassing the entire south of Italy. Amalfi had also lost its own commercial stronghold to the advantage of the other maritime republics, in particular to Venice, which had appropriated its trade links with the Orient. Pisa, on the other hand, plundered and burnt Amalfi during the raids it carried out in 1135 and 1137, but despite this, the valiant coastal town managed to conserve its own sphere of commerce, albeit less extensive than before.



Above: the islets called "Li Galli" and, in the background, the island of Capri.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

The long isolation of the Amalfi coast, which until the last century could only be reached by sea, has meant that numerous traditions have stood the test of time.

This is evident in the field of architecture where the most characteristic feature is the vaulted roof structure. This singular building technique, which is found not only along this coastline but also in other parts of southern Italy, has been the subject of much study. Despite the different interpretations suggested by scholars, the main controversy is whether or not these flattened dome-shaped roofs were 'imported' from Islamic culture.

Those in favour of the Arabic-Byzantine origin theory point to parallel examples in places like Tunisia, Algeria (in particular, the town of El Oued, known as "the thousand cupolas"), the Lebanon

coastline and the Assuan region in Egypt.

However, those against it point out that there was no need to wait for the expansion of the Arab world to learn a technique which had already been widely consolidated in the western Roman tradition: given the lack of suitable material on the Amalfi Coast to make tiles and weathering material for roofs, it had simply become a necessity.

These contrasting opinions include further evaluation on the more or less "spontaneous" character of the constructions versus their rural and/or civilian origin. Facing out over the sea yet firmly rooted in agricultural traditions, they actually seem to characterise a hybrid form of civilisation, i.e. that of a sea-faring people who also worked the land, which developed along the Coast thanks to the sound business sense of the people of Amalfi in the

Middle Ages. According to a study carried out in 1993 by the Amalfi Heritage and Cultural Centre (Cento di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana), it would appear that numerous buildings in several coastal towns date back to the period of the Duchy of Amalfi.



Alongside:
typical architecture
of the Amalfi coast.
On the following page:
the façade of the
Amalfi Cathedral and
the bell tower.



POSITANO

The first traces of human life in the Positano area can be found in a cave located in the "La Porta" area; the lower strata date back to the Romanellian culture of the Paleolithic age while the upper strata date back to the Mesolithic age. It would appear that the cave was used between 13,000 and 8,000 years ago, although such an early appearance does not correspond to evidence of other settlements found in the area. Late Bronze age mythology was later to draw attention to the site through the famous episode of the Sirens recounted by Homer. This tale was passed down by ancient Aegean sailors who associated the three Sirens, Ligea, Leucosia and Partenope, with the three islands - now known as Li Galli - which lie in front of modern-day Positano.

These Sirens committed suicide because Odysseus (Ulysses) somehow managed to escape the enchantment of their songs. Apart from mythical trans-forma-

tions, this small archipelago effectively constituted an obligatory stop on the route taken by the Achaeans from the 15th century B.C. onwards as they headed to the islands of Ischia and Vivara. In the classical age, Strabo the historian still referred to the three islands as "Sirenuse". Only from the 1st century A.D. onwards were certain parts of the coast - including Positano - chosen by the Romans.



patriciate as sites for luxurious villas overlooking the sea. According to some scholars, one such villa

at Positano belonged to Posides, a former slave who had been granted freedom by the Emperor Claudius, and the name Posidanium passed from his home to the entire town.





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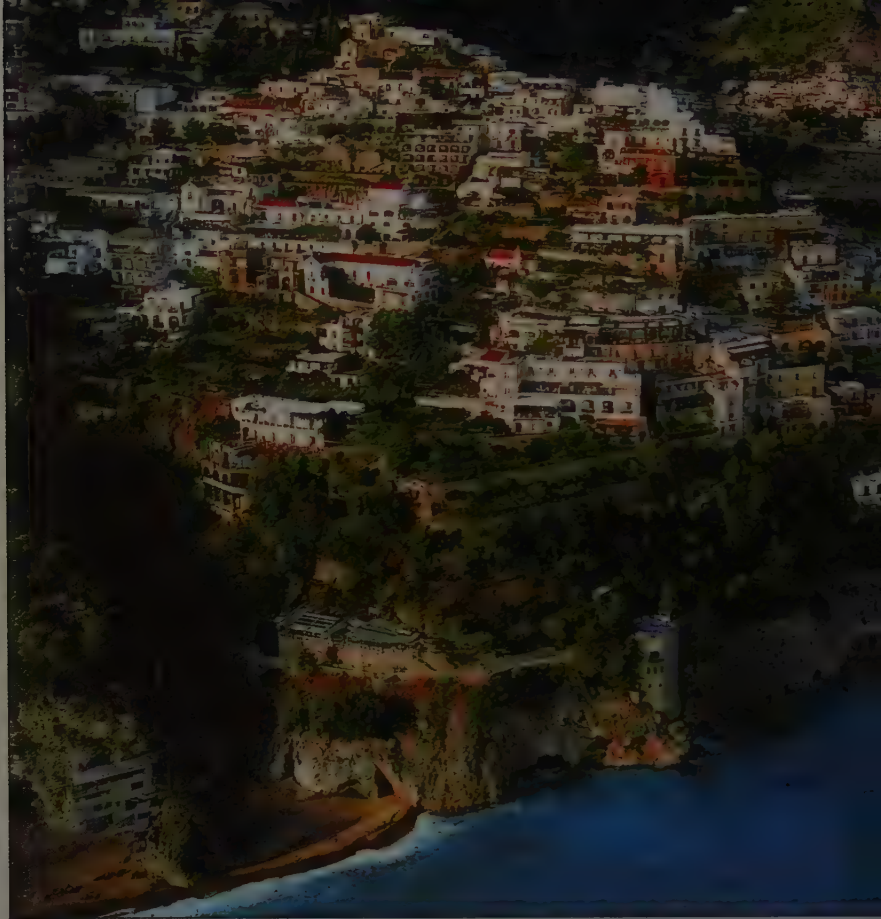
Street Plan of Positano

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| ① Town hall | ⑤ On-call doctor |
| ② Tourist Office | ⑥ Public telephones |
| ③ Post office | ⑦ Tennis courts |
| ④ Car park | ⑧ Carabinieri |



Unfortunately, an impenetrable veil obscures the history of the Coast during the Dark Ages, making it impossible to uncover information on the origins of the towns and villages. The first historically reliable references to Positano date from the 9th-10th centuries A.D. and describe the settlement of a community of Benedictine monks in the Abbey of St. Mary and St. Vi-

tus (Abbazia di Santa Maria e San Vito). From the 12th century onwards, it was included in the Congregation of Cava dei Tirreni, administered by the local Abbey of the Most Holy Trinity (Abbazia della SS. Trinità). Most of the history of the inhabitants of Positano is connected to the Abbey of St. Mary and St. Vitus, which wielded not only spiritual but also tempo-



ral power over the local community in a feudal-type relationship. The people were subjected to vassalage through the payment of taxes and duties, which created great discontent. It appears that the death of King Robert of Anjou (1343) saw the end of the slavery endured by the Positano people at the hands of the monastery.

Once freed from vassalage, the inhabitants of Positano built up an efficient navy through which they became highly skilled in trading, often in competition with Amal-

fi which, in the aftermath of the Norman conquest in 1131, gradually fell into decline. By now the energy and zest of the Amalfi people, although still a force to be reckoned with, could not keep up with the competition brought about by the change in the political order of the peninsula as well as the presence of merchants from Pisa and Catalonia in the lower

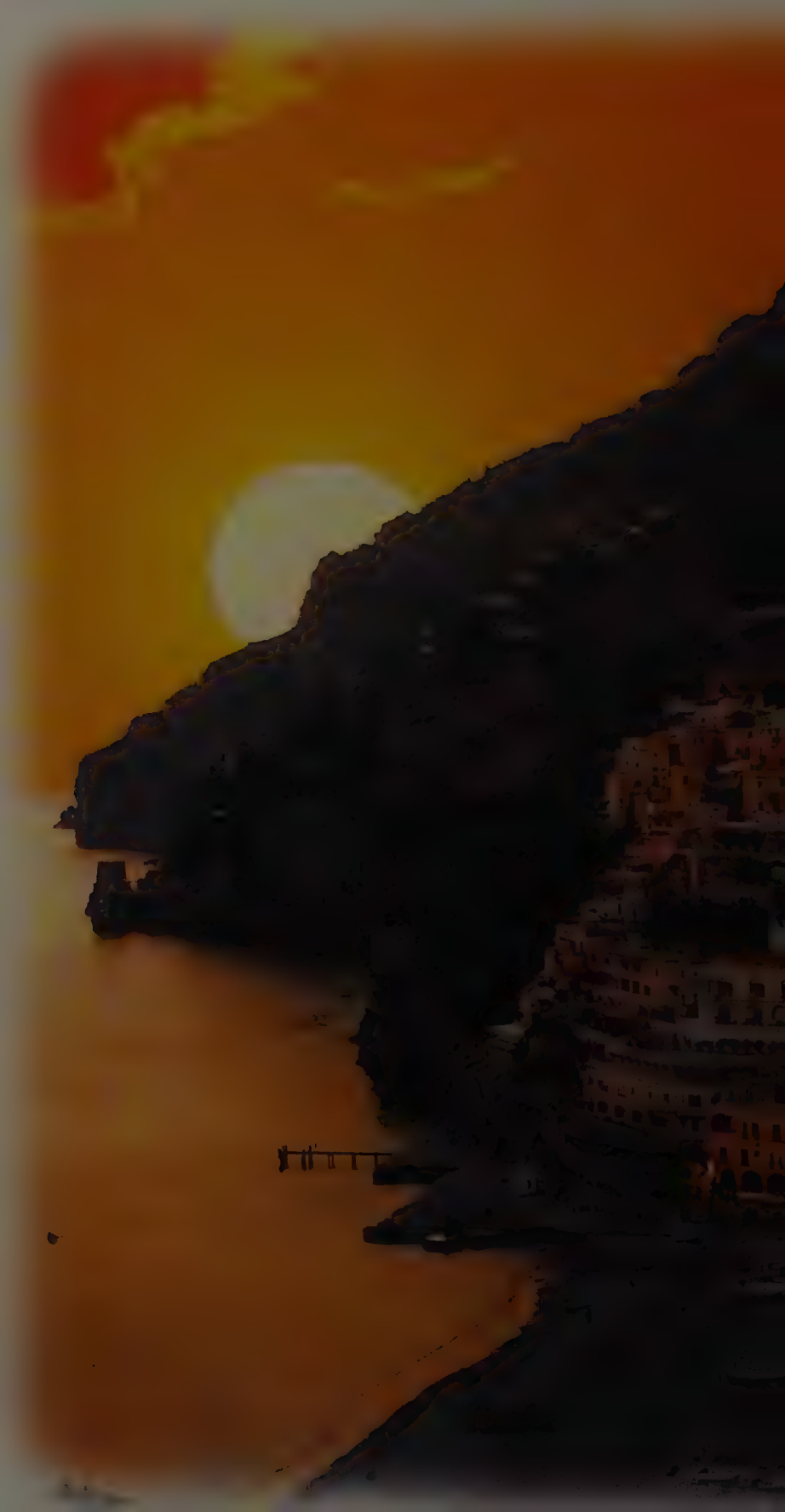
Tyrrhenian sea. During the twenty-year war with the Sicilian Vespri (1282), the Angevins, who were the new lords of southern Italy, further weakened Amalfi by imposing a naval blockade and confiscating its fleet to be sent to Sicily. It was only in the context of such events that the Positano people enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, however fleeting, mainly due to Amalfi's unexpected decline in power, and not to their own merit as such. And so the Positanese galleys began to set sail regularly to the major ports in Liguria,

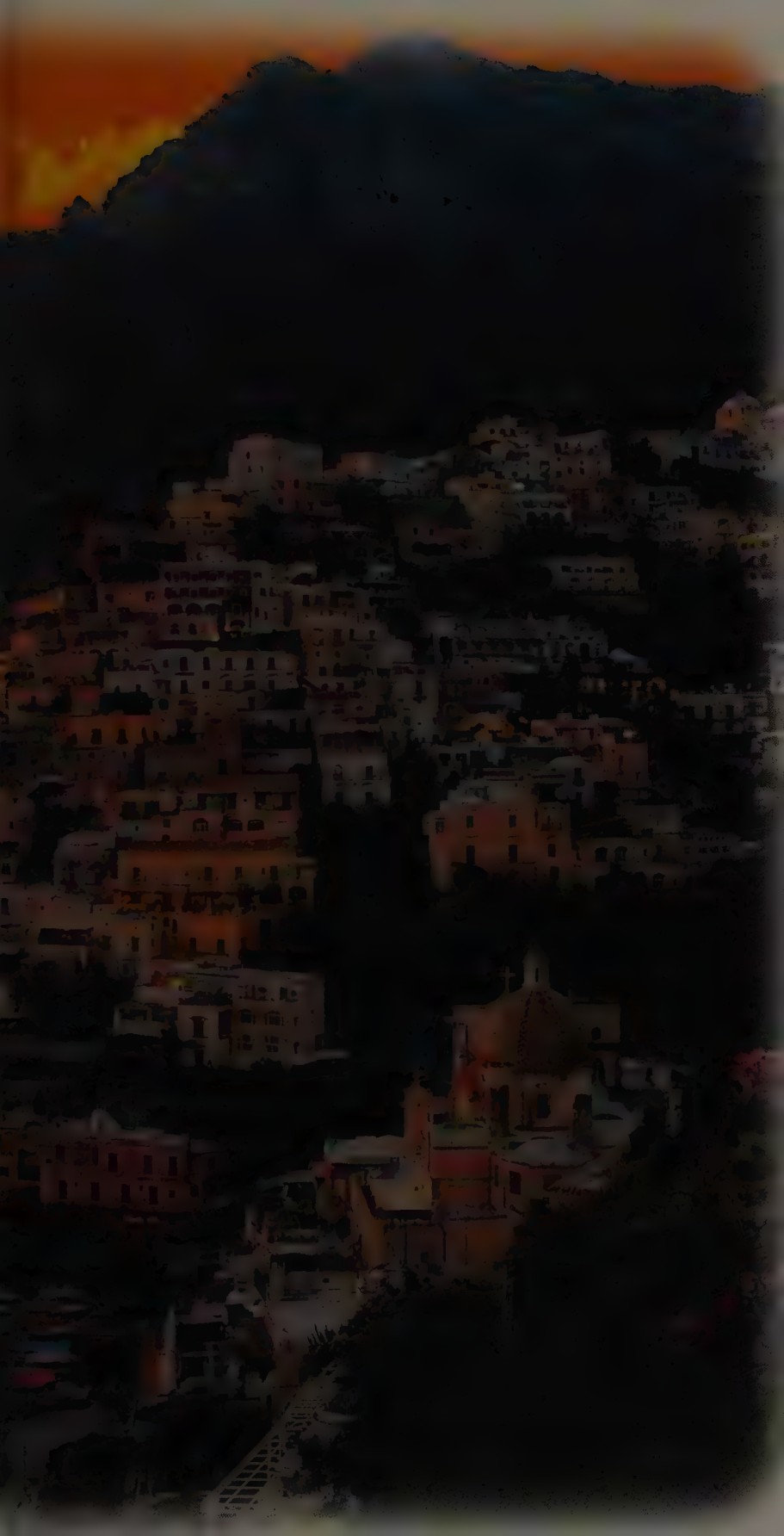


Provence and Catalonia. There is actual documentary evidence that the largest number of ships and sailors in the kingdom came from Amalfi and Positano, the towns which were believed to have the finest sea-faring and ship-building traditions. When the Naples branch of the Angevin family died out, there followed a bitter series of battles for succession to the kingdom of Naples, characterised by the bloody years between 1348 and 1442 and con-



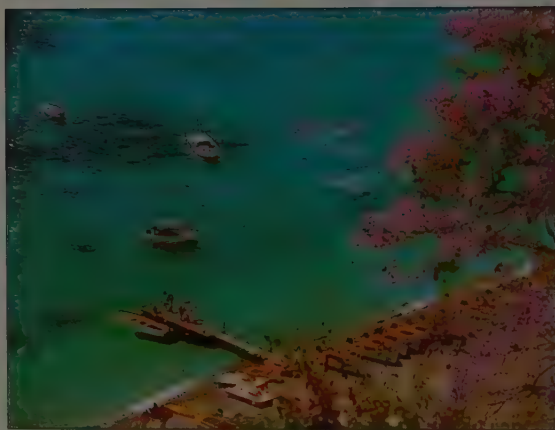
Above: an aerial view with the sandy shore of Marina Grande.
On the following page: the island "Li Galli".
Alongside: a picturesque part of the coast.







**Above: a view by night.
Alongside: the shore
and landing stage at
Marina Grande.**



cluded by the victory of the Aragonese over the Angevins.

The rigid feudal system, frequent pirate raids and pestilence caused by wartime misery and devastation produced not only a serious economic crisis but also the disappearance of the merchant

bourgeoisie which had once created wealth in the area.

Alfonso of Aragon, the new monarch of the Kingdom, found himself with major debts following the war of succession and was obliged to grant as fiefs the baronies of Angri, Gragnano, Lettere, Pimonte, Le Franche, Positano and the Li Galli islands. Thus Positano saw the beginning of a 250-year period of alternate subjection to barons and feudal lords which lasted until 1699, when the local people managed to free themselves upon payment of large sums of money and were re-admitted to the royal household.

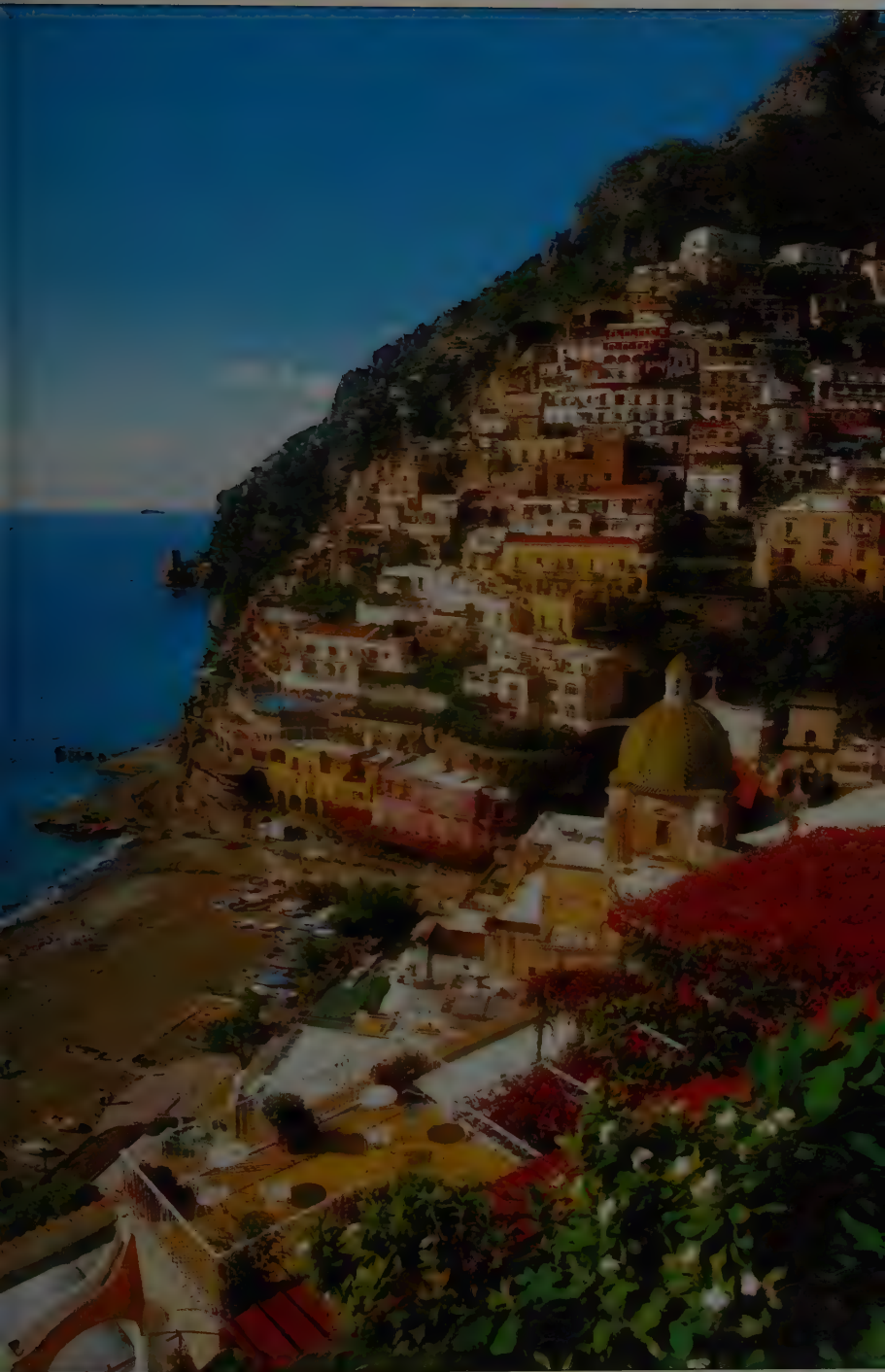
By now the spirit of the people of Positano was thoroughly worn down if not com-

pletely broken, and many of them had to leave town and seek work elsewhere. Trade and ship-building, which were once particularly flourishing business activities, continued to decline rapidly. As it lay hidden from sight at the westernmost tip of the Amalfi Coast and was linked to the other coastal towns only by sea or by means of an impervious mountain pass through the Lattari, Positano remained isolated right up to the end of the 19th century when the 'ancestor' of modern-day trunk road 163 was at long last hewn out of the rock face. This event was to pave the way for the town's vocation as a highly sought-after tourist resort, which today is the mainstay of the local economy.

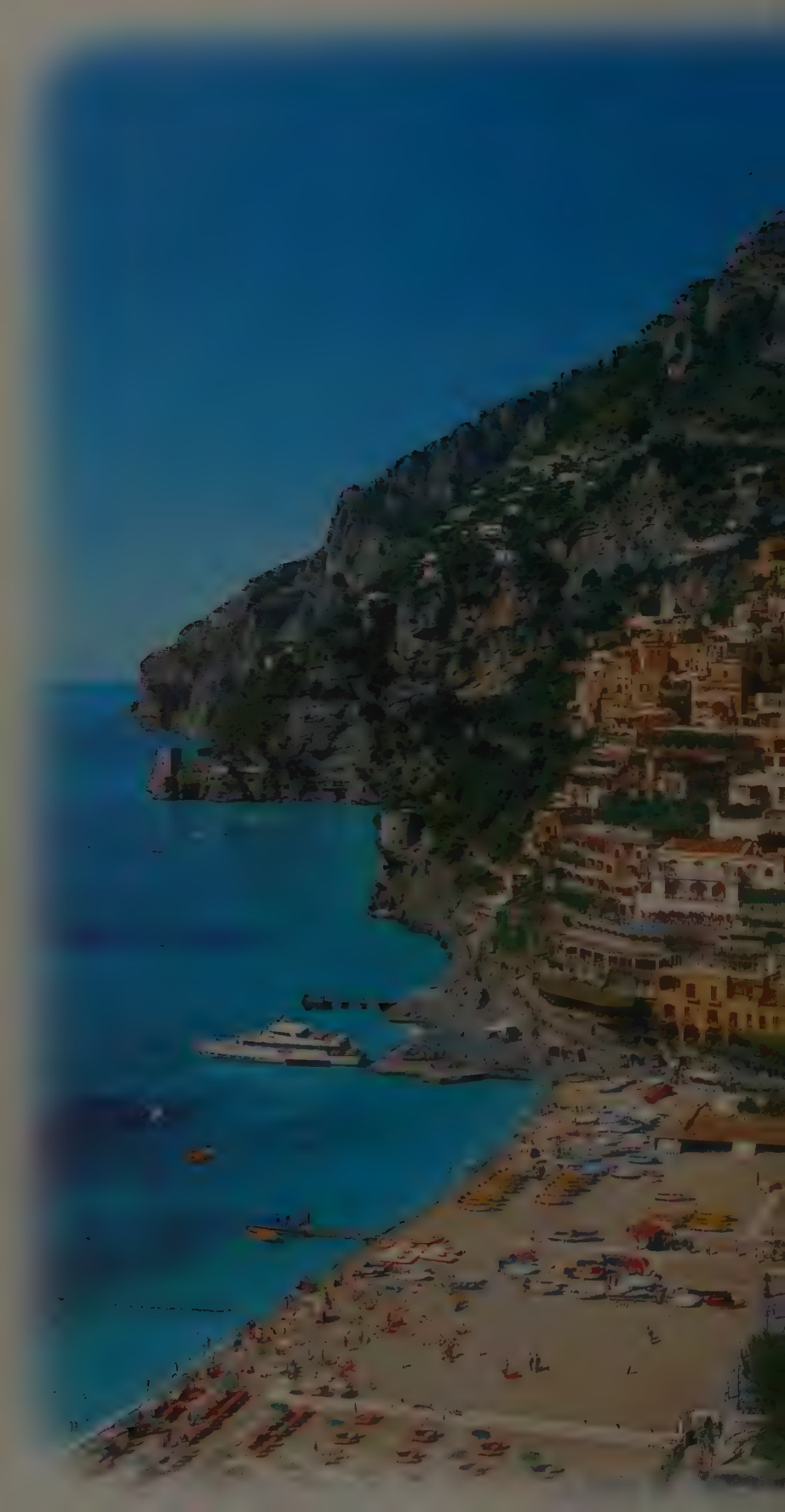
Topographical Details

The town is spread out over one of the slopes of Mount Comune, softening its craggy outline. A single road, via Pasitea, winds its way from the Town Hall to the Piazzetta dei Mulini and at the

junction of the road to Amalfi, continuing uphill, it turns into via Cristoforo Colombo. Looking down at the town from above, the eye becomes enchanted by an intricate network of narrow,



A panorama with the buttresses of Mount Comune.







The Parish Church of Santa Maria Assunta.

picturesque steps, which create the impression of a Nativity crib.

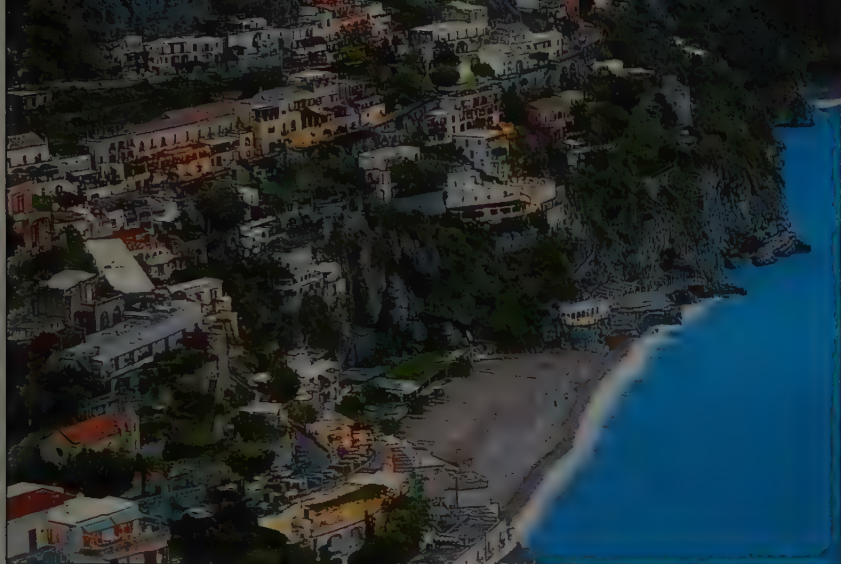
The Piazzetta dei Mulini leads down to the small Piazza Flavio Gioia where the Church of **Our Lady of the Assumption** (Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta) and its characteristic majolica-tiled dome stand. Inside, there is a nave and two aisles separated by pillars, and in the right-hand side of the transept hangs a painting by Fabrizio

Santafedele entitled *Circumcision* (1599). The main altar is decorated with a 17th century Byzantine style panel painting depicting the Madonna and Child.

There is a bell tower next to the church and a heavy marble slab mounted on its doorway depicts a sea monster. In mediaeval times, this slab together with other marble and mosaic remains cemented on the other side of the

The high altar of Santa Maria Assunta.





A panorama.

building along the Rampa Teglia had been part of the church flooring. From there a small door leads to the Crypt, the oldest part of the entire building, on top of which the basilica was built. Nearby the church, concealed by flood detritus and modern-day boutiques, lie the ruins of a Roman villa dating from the 1st century A.D. which probably belonged to the famous freedman, Posides, who gave his name

to Posidanium, which was later to become Positano.

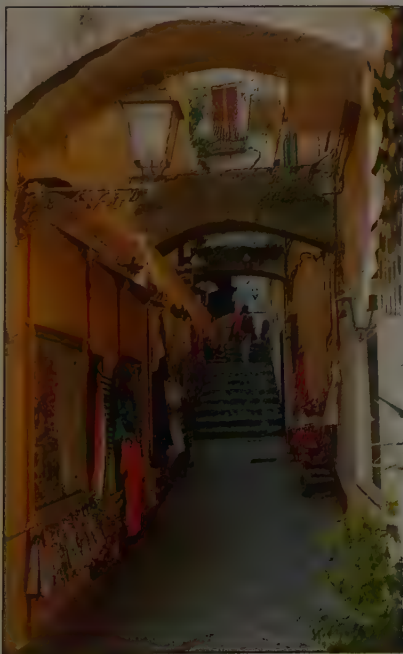
To the west of the Marina Grande stretches Fornillo beach. To the east lie the smaller beaches of La Porta, Fiumicello and Arienzo.

Lastly, the villages of Montepertuso (350m above sea level) and Nocella (420m above sea level) offer a delightful range of nature trails with breathtaking views over the entire coastline.

The coastline from the "Le Agavi" Hotel.



Alleyway with typical shops.



The coastline seen from the sea

The first part of the coast just outside Salerno cannot be reached by sea, and is known as the Capo d'Orso. The most recent, enthusiastic and precise visitor to this stretch of land was Franco Patini who, through the pages of "Acqua", gives us an incomparable "pilot's book with which to discover the secrets of the coast". He is our principal reference in this chapter. Capo d'Orso is characterised by dolomite-like cliffs, and scattered with holm-oaks, arbutus berries, mastic trees, heather and myrtle. As far as Baia Verde, the sea cannot be reached from land. Obviously, the aforementioned places can be reached by sea in fishing boats and other boats of all sizes, but is important to inform oneself first about docking possibilities.

Let's move on to Vettica, with its natural arch and caverns used for mooring boats, and with houses and monasteries imbedded in the rock for centuries. At Conca Marina we discover another string of little houses, a small beach, and a very steep staircase for those who prefer not to come by boat. Thus we arrive at the most famous Grotto, known as "dello Smeraldo", which Patini describes: "apart from the ordinary access by land, there is an underwater passage 7 to 11 metres below the sea level, which gives the cave its extraordinary green colour: The sea-bed of Vettica used to be especially rich in coral. Thirty years ago Neapolitan coral-divers still used to collect coral there at depths of up to 90 metres. The underwater stalactite formations of the Smeraldo grotto are due to successive risings and lowering of the sea-level".

In our opinion, the most fascinating point of the coastline, both from land and sea, is the Furore fjord: perhaps because we think of it as the favourite spot of Greta Garbo and Stokowski. Its tiny town centre looks as if it was built by Tom Thumb on the Giant's hand. Its enough to calm even the most restless soul.

More houses, and ravines, set into the rock are now an indissoluble part thereof: Praiano, with its "faraglioni", and terraced lemon orchards, cliff-like walls, and pine-trees caressing the sea. The part of the Sorrento coast that is most free of houses runs from Fornillo to Punta Campanella. There are two curiosities worth mentioning here: the tiny island of Isca which for years belonged to Eduardo De Filippo and which is inaccessible except by boat; and the three small islands called the Galli, with their mediterranean vegetation, they were used for centuries as places of punishment by the doges of Amalfi.

From the sea to the hills, the first morphologic impact is with "calcareous-dolomitic cliffs which loom over the sea and which are broken up by numerous faults which correspond to deep channels modelled by erosion.

The vegetation goes from thriving bushes of "Thapsia graganica", whose yellow-green flowers decorate the area nearest to the sea in spring, to splashes of origanum and butcher's broom, rosemary and arbutus berries, myrtle and honeysuckle, with wooded areas of holm-oak and pine, and even oak trees higher up.

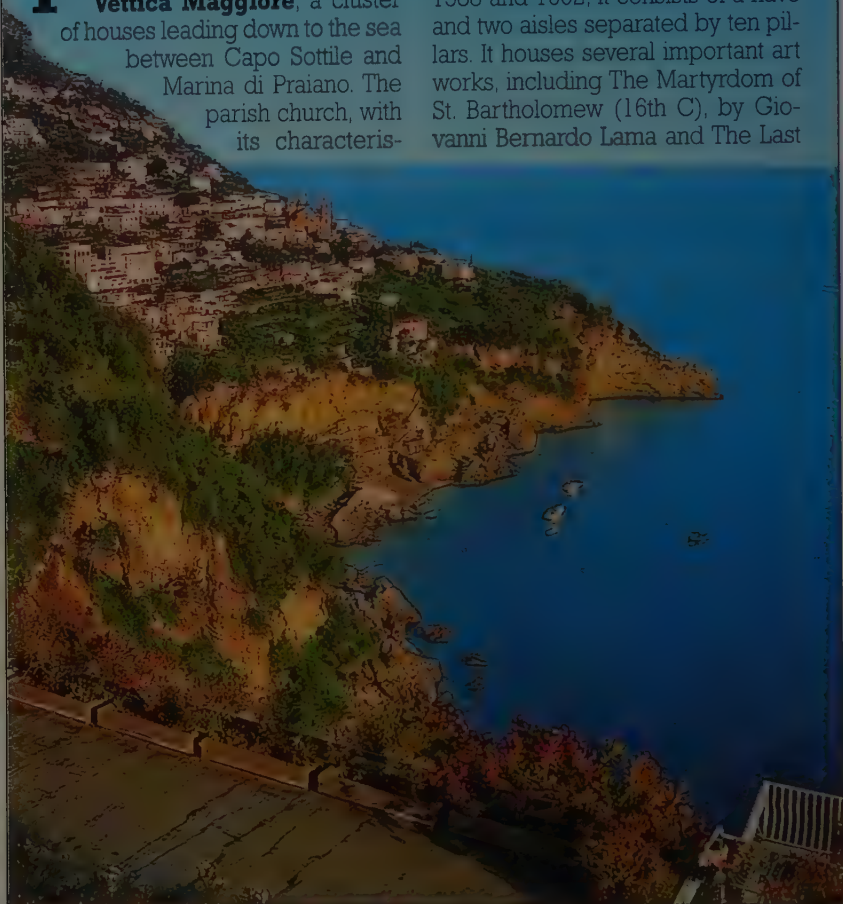




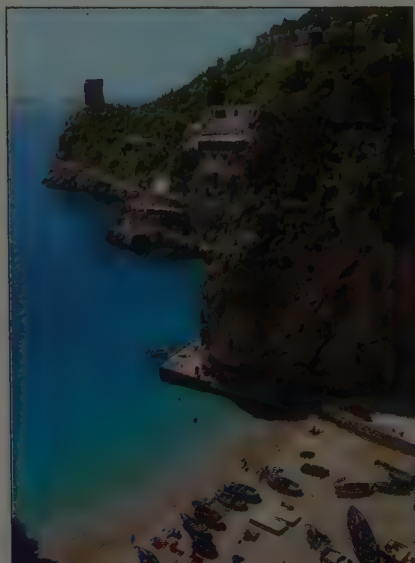
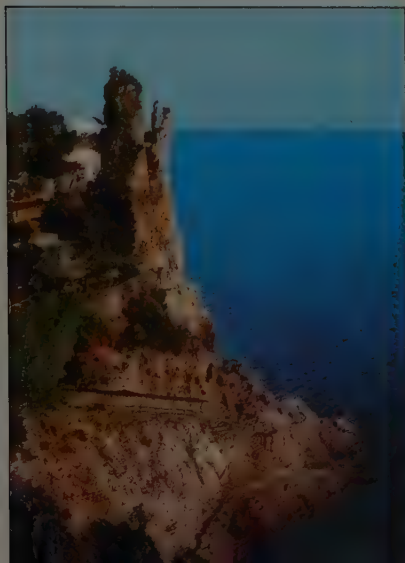
PRAIANO

Trunk road 163 from Positano to Amalfi leads to the town of **Vettica Maggiore**, a cluster of houses leading down to the sea between Capo Sottile and Marina di Praiano. The parish church, with its characteris-

tic majolica-tiled dome, is dedicated to St. Gennaro. Built between 1588 and 1602, it consists of a nave and two aisles separated by ten pillars. It houses several important art works, including The Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew (16th C), by Giovanni Bernardo Lama and The Last



Above: a view of Vettica Maggiore. Below, on the left: the dolomitic pinnacle known as "Madonna col Bambino" (Madonna with child); on the right: the tower of Assiola and Marina di Praia.





Supper (18th C) by Francesco Saverio Carvelli. Next to the church stands the 18th century bell tower. The towers at **Grado** and **Assiola** form the boundaries of the town along the coastline. The former, built around 1568, sits on the headland of Capo Sottile. Barrel-vaulted and built of limestone, it initially consisted of a ground floor with the guardroom above, and was crowned by embrasures. It has since been completely refurbished, and all that remains of its original design is the exterior. The tower at **Assiola**, however, is one of the oldest and most charming in the entire area. Constructed in 1270 during the reign of Charles I of Anjou, it is a well-preserved example of mediaeval fortification. The circular design included two rooms, one above the other. The

walled structure is made from limestone and is also barrel-vaulted. The road which rises up along the slopes of Mount St. Angelo leads to **Praiano**, which stands 240 metres above sea level. The origins of the town seem to date back to the period when high-ranking Amalfi families started to build houses in the parts of the countryside where they already owned estates. Indeed, it would appear that the parish church of St. Luke (San Luca) was founded by two aristocratic families from Amalfi, the Alagnos and the Cersaros. Several paintings by Giovanni Bernardo Lama can be found here, as well as the 16th century Madonna of the Rosary by Padovano da Montorio.

Above: Capo Sottile with the Grado Tower, near Conca dei Marini.

Below: a view of Praiano on the cliffs of Mount Sant'Angelo.



FURORE AND CONCA DEI MARINI

After Praiano, just past the tiny picturesque harbour, **Marina di Praia**, which is protected by the watch-tower of Assiola, the coast road leads to the viaduct spanning the dizzying heights of the fjord at **Furore**. The Schiatro stream flowing down the mountain face once turned the wheel of a paper mill whose presence confirms that in bygone years this narrow cove was used as a delivery point for goods right until the coast road was finally opened in the last century. The seemingly never-ending steps wind their way over the mountain ridge as far as the upper part of the village, which is perched on the hills of San Elia, San Michele and San Giacomo and extends over an area of almost two square kilometres. The Church of Saint Elijah (Sant Elia), built in

1478, contains a triptych of The Virgin, St. Elijah and St. Bartholomew (1482) painted by Angelo Antonello da Capua and considered one of the most important art works to be seen along the Coast. Carrying on along the trunk road, visitors come to an opening on the right which overlooks **Conca dei Marini** and stands directly above the **Emerald Grotto**. At the Capo di Conca headland, a massive tower named after Charles V watches over the coastline. In 1543 the rowers of five Turkish galleys disembarked here and ransacked the Church of St. Pancratius (Chiesa di San Pancrazio), stripping it of its art treasures. In response, the local inhabitants decided to build a tower after receiving authorisation from Charles V. Extending across the mountain ridge,

A view of the coast near Conca dei Marini.



the municipality of Conca dei Marini lies slightly higher than the tower, almost 200 metres above sea level. It consists of two villages, **Tovere** and **Vettica Minore**, whose church and majolica-tiled bell-tower is home to the Madonna of the Rosary (16th century) attributed to the Sienna painter, Marco Pino. Down at the bottom of the Capo della Vite promontory, at sea level, stands the tower bearing the same name. Built between 1569-70, this tower has a large barrel-vaulted room whose spacious embrasured terrace houses the guard-room.

**Restoration work
for the town of
Vallone di Furore.**





Some cherming views of the cliff below Conca dei Marini.







The Emerald Grotto

Between the coastal grottos is one of the largest and most famous. Discovered in 1932, it measures 45 metres by 32 metres. Daylight filters through an entrance way which lies almost 12 metres underwater, causing it to refract and change colour, re-appear-

ing as an intense emerald green inside the cavern. The changes in sea level over the years are evidenced by the columns of stalactites and stalagmites, some of which actually rise up out of the water. There are numerous indications that the grotto is karstic in



origin. From a biological point of view, there is a predominance of sea sponges which, given the lack of light, have lost their natural colour due to the presence of small symbiotic algae. Among the most important coelenterates to be found in the area is the rare *Anemonactis mazely*. This actinia usually hides from the light and

lives buried in the sea bed, only coming out, cloaked in a bright pink colour, to mate during the winter months. By land the grotto can be reached by lifts from the road above or by a flight of steps with a spectacular view of the coastline, or by sea by anchoring at the small quay in front of the entrance.

AMALFI

A letter dated 596 A.D. which Pope Gregory the Great addressed to Bishop Pimenius is the first historically indisputable proof of the existence of the city of Amalfi. From the very beginning it had been the southern-most outpost of the Byzantine Duchy of Naples and was in continual opposition first to the Lombards from Benevento and then to the Lombards from Salerno.

Indeed the Lombards made several attempts to take control of the city between the 8th and 9th centuries before finally conquering it in 838, thanks to the betrayal of the rulers of the city by certain Amalfi families. However, the Amalfi people re-organised their ranks, attacked and successfully sacked Salerno the following summer, freeing their fellow townsmen who had been taken prisoner by the Lombards. On 1st September 839 Amalfi declared its independence and later established itself as an autonomous and sovereign Republic.

In actual fact, the war between the Byzantines and



the Lombards from Benevento and Salerno led to their mutual annihilation, and it was from these spent ashes that a newer and politically stronger Amalfi was born.

Initially, the city was administered by annually elected *comites* (counts), then by prefects and lastly by *duces* (dukes). The territory it governed stretched not only along the coastline between Cetara and Positano, including the Li Galli islands and Capri, but also inland, including the towns of Scala, Tramonti, Agerola, Lettere, Pimonte and Gragnano. These were connected to each other by a carefully designed belt of fortified lookouts in the mountain passes and the slopes along the coast.

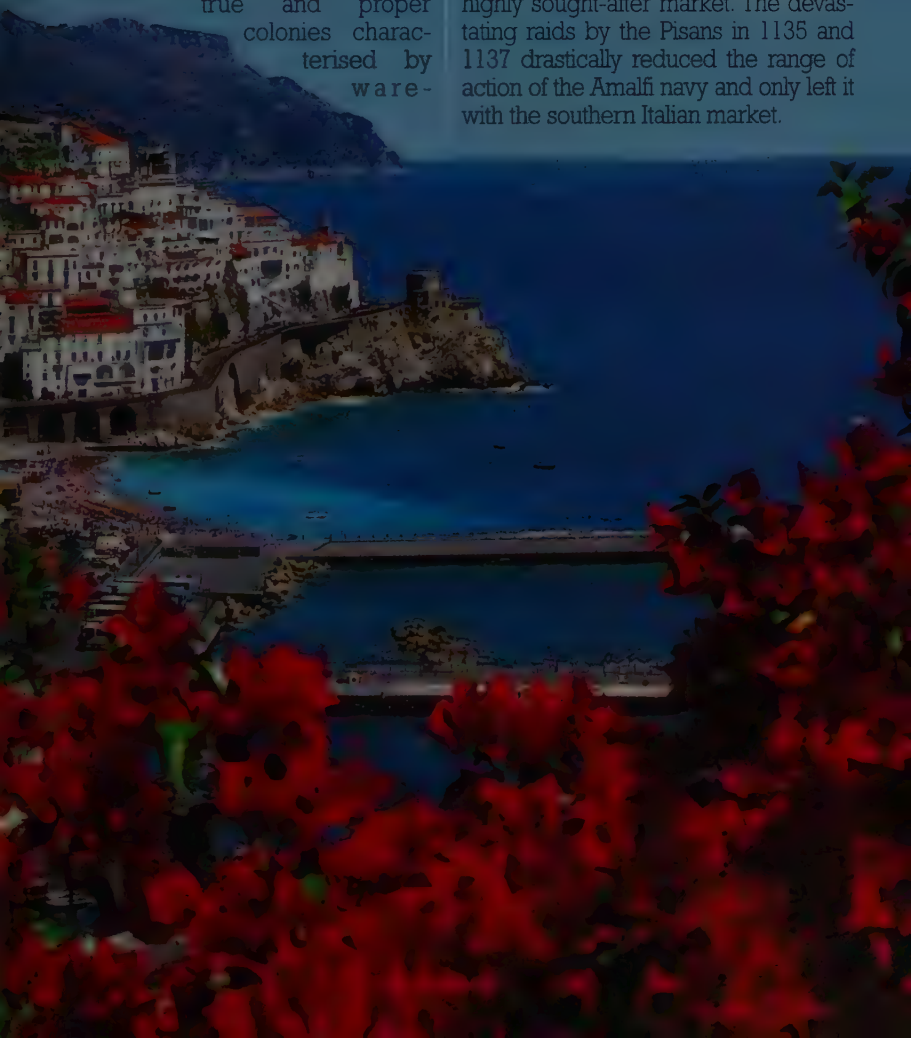
From the 8th century onwards, sea trade was Amalfi's the main resource, and its citizens traded throughout the Mediterranean area with the Byzantines and with the Arabs of northern Africa. Thus the Amalfi merchants were able to set up

true and proper
colonies characterised by
ware-

houses, monasteries, shops, neighbourhoods and hospitals which did not come under the jurisdiction of the local authorities. In northern Africa this allowed the merchants to exchange their wood for gold which was then used as a bartering tool along the Syrian-Palestinian coast to obtain precious stones and valuable textiles that eventually found their way to the Italian markets.

In this climate of efficiency and organisation the Amalfi people were the first to draw up a maritime code, the *Tabula de Amalphi*, a legal work of great value not just in mediaeval times but also in the modern age.

However, under domination by the Normans (1131) and later the Swabians, Amalfi saw its own needs subordinated to the greater needs of the Kingdom, whose rulers increasingly sacrificed Amalfi's commercial interests in the Middle East allowing Venice to successfully extend its dominion to include this highly sought-after market. The devastating raids by the Pisans in 1135 and 1137 drastically reduced the range of action of the Amalfi navy and only left it with the southern Italian market.





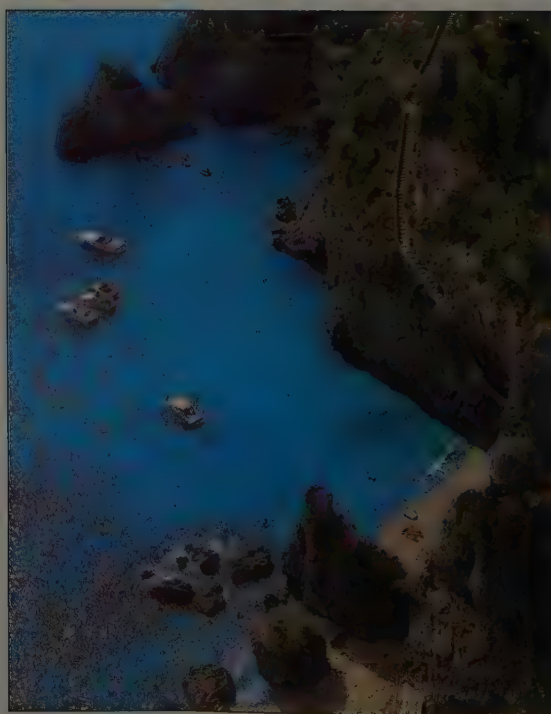
Street Plan of Amalfi

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ① Car park | ⑨ Sports centre |
| ② Tourist Office | ⑩ Local Health Department (ASL) |
| ③ Post office | Hovercraft and boat embarkation |
| ④ Hospital | ⑪ point |
| ⑤ First Aid station | ⑫ Paper Museum |
| ⑥ Public telephones | ⑬ Museum of Rural Traditions |
| ⑦ Harbour Master Office | ⑭ Public library |
| ⑧ Carabinieri | ⑮ Schools |



Hotels of Amalfi

- | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Luna Torre Saracena | 10 Amalfi | 17 Miramalfi |
| 2 Marina Riviera | 11 La Bussola | 18 Il Nido |
| 3 Sole | 12 Cappuccini Convento | 19 Santa Caterina |
| 4 Residence | 13 Aurora | 20 Villa Santa Caterina |
| 5 Fontana | 14 La Conchiglia | ● Bellevue |
| 6 Centrale | 15 Garden House | ● Dei Cavalieri |
| 7 S. Andrea | 16 Excelsior Grand Hotel | ● Il Saraceno |
| 8 Lidomare | | ● Amalfi 900 |
| 9 Proto | | ● Villa Principessa |



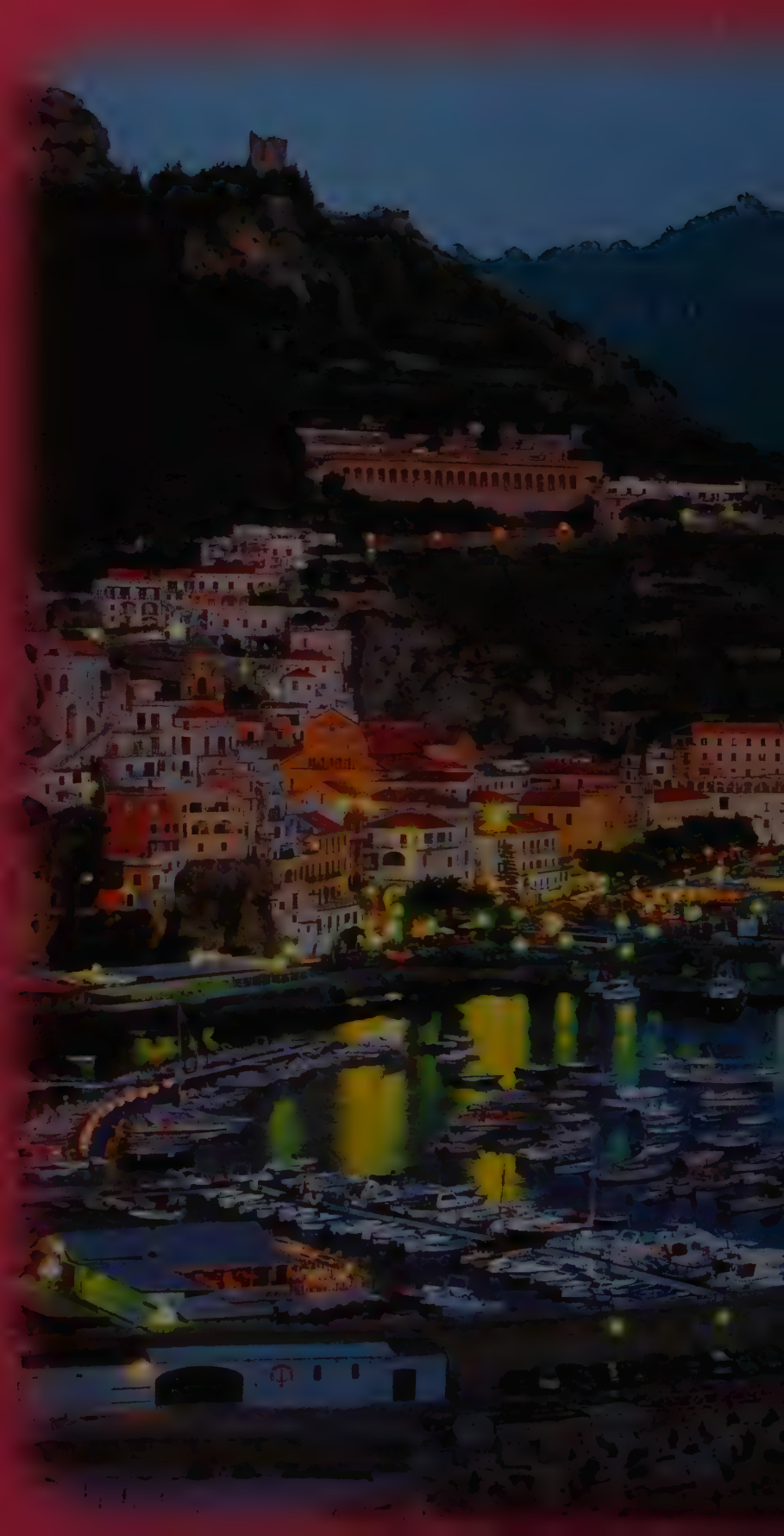
Above: view of the historical centre and the Cathedral.
Alongside above: fishing boats.
Alongside centre: Punta "Hotel Luna" former convent.
Alongside below: a picturesque corner of the coast.

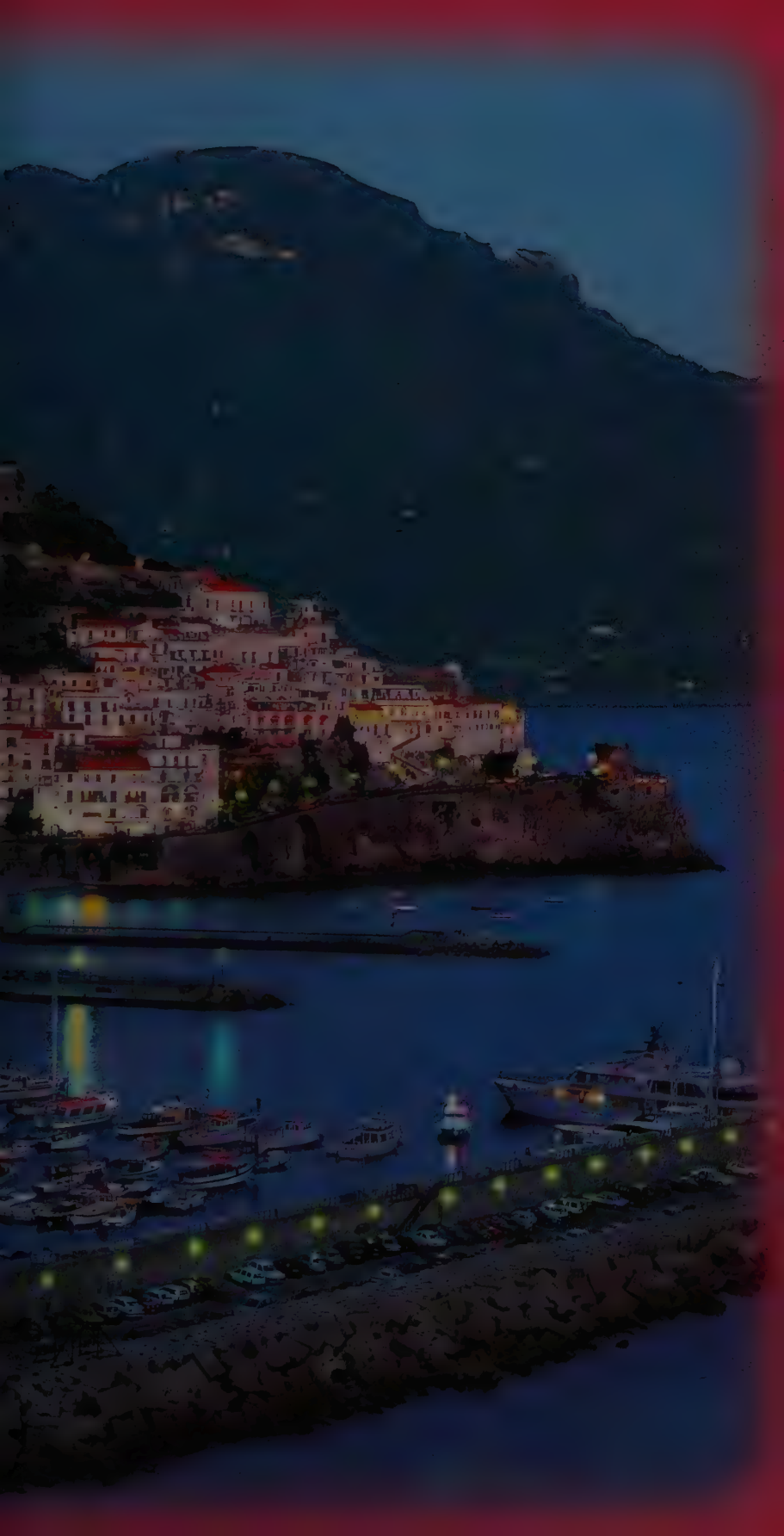


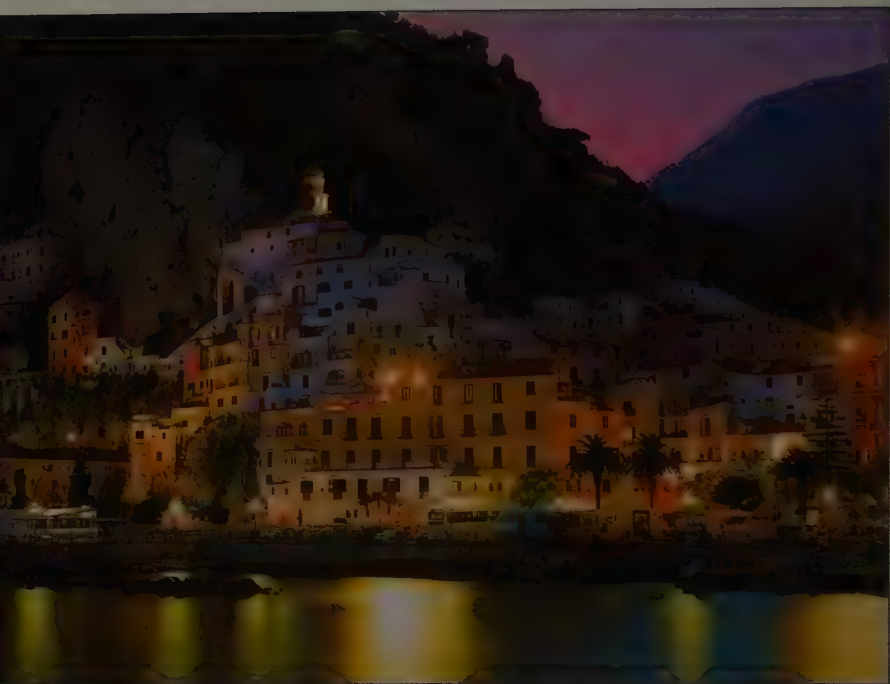
Despite this, the aristocracy of this duchy knew how to maintain its position in the administration of the Kingdom and many families from Scala and Ravello successfully obtained important posts. The local church also enjoyed a wide range of privileges and international prestige. During this period the Amalfi people fell back on their own resources and set about refurbishing the urban layout and architecture of the city and its surrounding villages. Between the late 12th century and the early 13th century, they introduced the use of a magnetic needle into navigation and perfected its technical characteristics. They also be-

gan manufacturing paper on an industrial scale by employing techniques and methods imported from the Arab world. In 1274, Judge Giovanni Augustariccio drew up in writing an important body of civil laws entitled *Consuetudines Civitatis Amalfie*.

With the arrival of the Angevins, the new lords of southern Italy, the economy of Amalfi was subjected to even greater ruin. The outbreak of the twenty-year war of the Sicilian Vespri (1282), in which the Aragonese fought the Angevins for the domination of the Kingdom of Southern Italy, irreversibly worsened conditions in Amalfi.







A views by night.

Not only did the Angevins impose a sea blockade on the city, but they also confiscated its fleet of ships which was to be sent to Sicily. Fierce competition with the Catalan merchants in the lower Tyrrhenian sea coupled with the terrible episodes of pestilence in 1306 and 1348 and a disastrous sea-storm in 1343 proved the final straw.

And so this glorious maritime republic fell from glory. It was then granted as a fief to a succession of noble families from 1392 right up to 1583: first to Venceslao Sanseverino, then the Colonna and Orsini families and lastly to the Piccolomini family, whose male born children succeeded each other as Dukes of Amalfi.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the city and its surrounding towns and villages were subject to radical urban restructuring which imposed the new Baroque style, not always successfully,



on the much older Romanic structures. Under French dominion in the early 19th century, the Coast was initially governed by Giuseppe Bonaparte and then from September 1808 onwards by Gioacchino Murat. With the advent of Romanticism, Amalfi and the neighbouring areas were re-discovered by numerous foreign visitors travelling through Italy in search of exoticism and artistic inspiration. This saw the beginning of tourism, which was to become the driving force behind the economic and social development in the years to come.

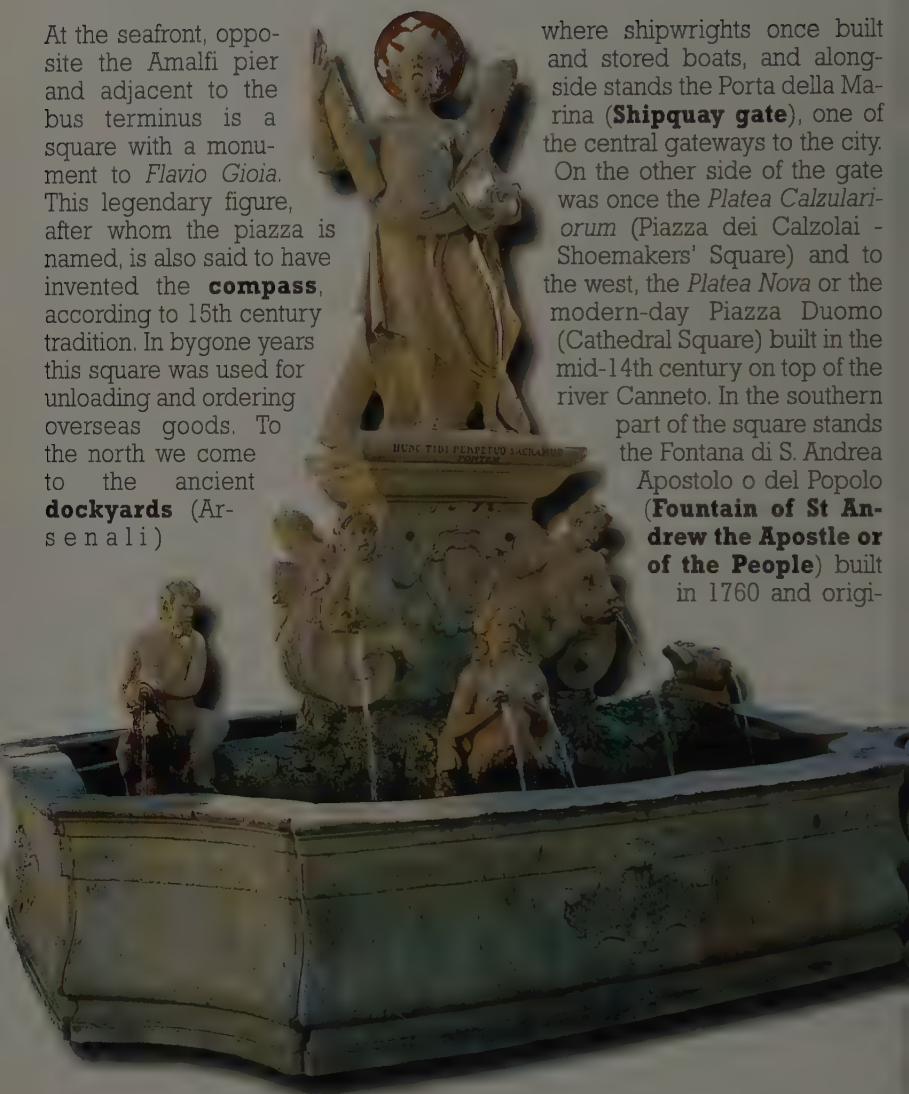
A view by night from Pogerola.



Topographical Details

At the seafront, opposite the Amalfi pier and adjacent to the bus terminus is a square with a monument to *Flavio Gioia*. This legendary figure, after whom the piazza is named, is also said to have invented the **compass**, according to 15th century tradition. In bygone years this square was used for unloading and ordering overseas goods. To the north we come to the ancient **dockyards** (Ar-senali)

where shipwrights once built and stored boats, and alongside stands the Porta della Marina (**Shipquay gate**), one of the central gateways to the city. On the other side of the gate was once the *Platea Calzulariorum* (Piazza dei Calzolari - Shoemakers' Square) and to the west, the *Platea Nova* or the modern-day Piazza Duomo (Cathedral Square) built in the mid-14th century on top of the river Canneto. In the southern part of the square stands the Fontana di S. Andrea Apostolo o del Popolo (**Fountain of St Andrew the Apostle or of the People**) built in 1760 and origi-



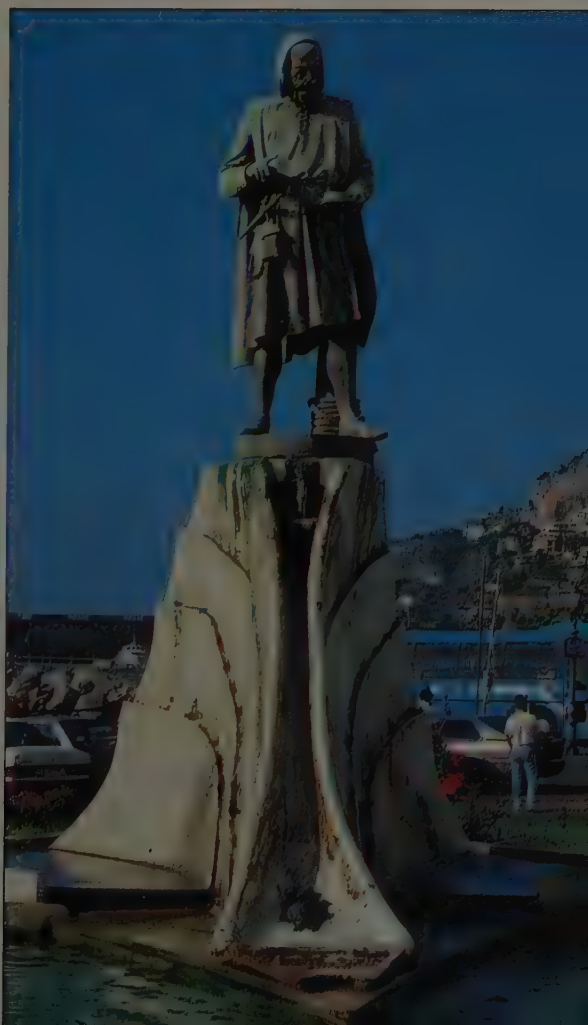
Above: the Sant'andrea fountain.

Below: ceramic panel "History of Amalfi".





nally located at the foot of the Cathedral steps. It was transferred to its modern-day position towards the end of the last century. Behind it stands a building which in the late Middle Ages was the *seggio dei nobili* (seat of the noblemen) as well as the residence of the court of the *protontino*, the chief commander of the Amalfi navy. A copy of the *Tabula de Amalpha* was kept here. Some years later, in 1583, the building became the residence of the Spanish Governor Viceroy.



Above:
the thirteenth century
Arsenal.
On the right:
the monument to
Flavio Gioia.



La Cattedrale di S. Andrea Apostolo

A long flight of 57 steps, built in 1728, leads to the atrium of the Cathedral dedicated to St Andrew the Apostle (San Andrea Apostolo). The present facade was completed in 1891, replacing the baroque design which collapsed in 1861. The tympanum of the new facade depicts a scene from the Apocalypse taken from the gospel according to St. John in which Christ is seated on the throne while the powerful people on Earth fall prostrate before him. The fascia underneath, which is surrounded by ogival niches, contains figures of the twelve apostles. The **bell-tower** (Campanile) rises up next to the cathedral. Solid square blocks of stone form the base of this three-storey construction whose sheer weight is lightened towards the top by mullioned windows



with two or three lights. The bells are hung on the third storey, which is ornately enhanced by the intersection of majolica-tiled arches.

At the front of the Cathedral is an atrium which was built in the early 13th century by Cardinal Pietro Capuano and Archbishop Matteo di Capua. On the outside a delightful pattern of Moorish arches runs into a series of marble columns, while the inside walls are made of huge two-tone tuff stone blocks. The current design is the result of 19th century rebuilding work. In fact, not all of the granite and marble columns are original. The inside wall is frescoed with biblical scenes depicting Christ and St Andrew the Apostle, which were painted in 1929 by Paolo Vetri, a pupil of Domenico Morelli's.



On the previous page:
the façade with
its imposing flight of steps.
Above: a detail of the atrium.
Alongside: the bronze door
cast in Constantinople in 1060,
framed in a marble doorway
from the eighth century.

New cathedral founded by Duke Mansone in 987 and enlarged at the beginning of the 13th century, dedicated to Saint Andrew and completely altered in the 18th century in the predominant Baroque style.

The restoration work of 1931 eliminated the Baroque decoration, restoring the primitive Romanesque structure.

Church of the Crucifix, this is the oldest cathedral of the city, initially dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption and the saints Cosma and Damiano, it now houses a museum.

Chiostro del Paradiso (Paradiso Cloister), former cemetery for illustrious and meritorious citizens; the overlying arches are typical of Romanesque-Amalfi architecture.

Ruins of the early Christian church.

Former prisons.

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The atrium contains three entrance doors to the Cathedral; the middle one is made of bronze cast in Constantinople in 1060 and set into a marble portal (8th century). It is historiated with anthropomorphic figures and geometrical-floral patterns. The actual cathedral, which is dedicated to St Andrew the patron saint of Amalfi, was

constructed in 987 by Duke Mansone I and extended in the 13th century by Cardinal Pietro Capuano. The inside of the Basilica is divided into a nave and two aisles which used to be separated by columns. In the Middle Ages the Basilicas of the Crucifix and St Andrew were very closely linked and constituted a single ar-

Traces of the original structure can still be found inside.

The bell tower was built between 1180 and 1276; the lower part has a clearly Romanesque style while the upper bell tower has strong Moorish features.

The roof has two different pitches because the one on the side facing the sea was probably rebuilt in the Baroque period.

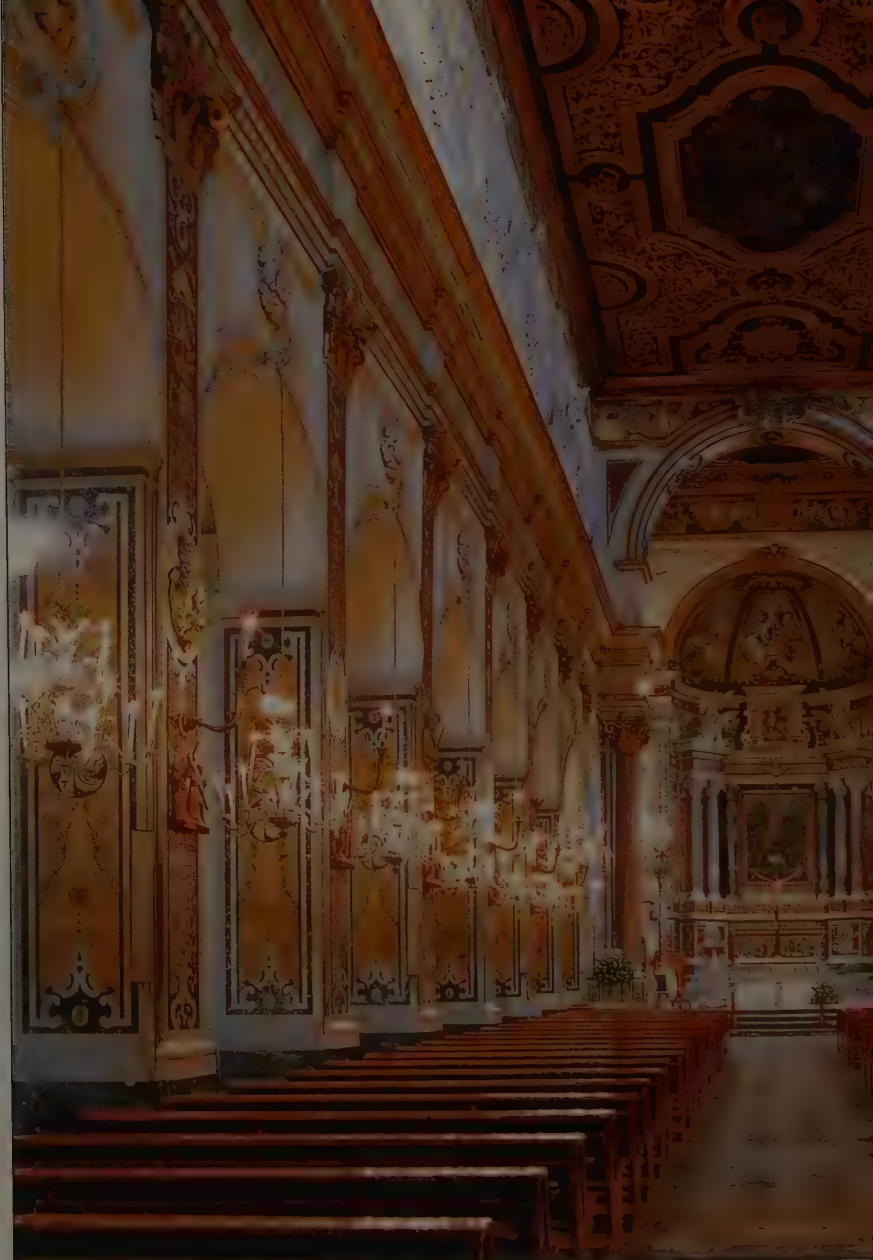
Mosaics depicting scenes from the Apocalypse of Saint John and the twelve disciples.

The portico was rebuilt at the end of the 19th century; typical Moorish arches and frescoes can also be admired here.



chitectural unit with six aisles, but during the early part of the 13th century the design was altered to its current layout by Archbishop Michele Bologna. These alterations involved replacing the columns by pillars covered in multi-coloured marble and blocking up the women's galleries with baroque decorative effects.

Andrea dell'Asta and his Neapolitan school were commissioned to do the fine gold and historiated decoration work on the caisson ceiling depicting the life and martyrdom of the saint. Ten small cross-vaulted chapels open out onto the aisles and contain 17th and 18th century paintings as well as marble and wooden



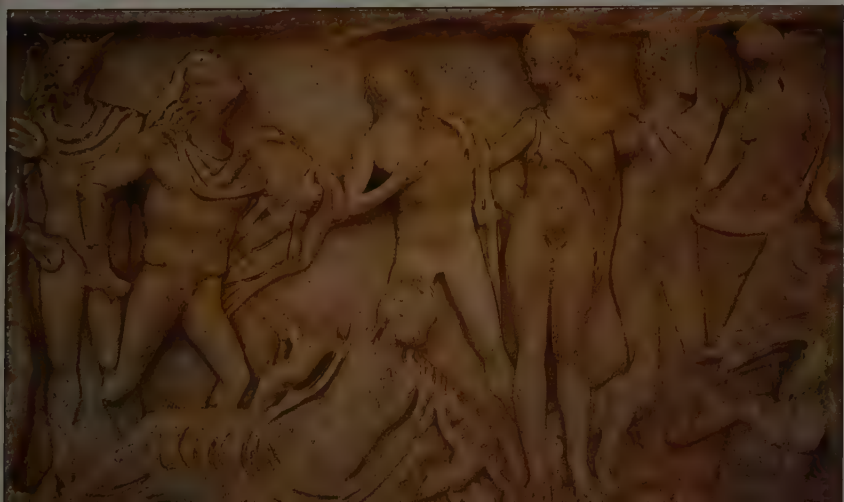
sculptures dating from various periods. A painting by Ottavio Eliani (18th century) portraying the miracle of St. Andrew hangs at the entrance to the right aisle. In the first chapel there is a group of saints in marble - *John the Evangelist, Benedict and John the Baptist*, the statue in the middle dates from the 17th century while the other two are 15th century works. Beyond the niche containing Christ's coffin there are four other chapels, and these contain works by the early 18th century painter Angelo Mirra and his school representing the *Madonna of the Rosario, St Michael the Archangel and the Nativity*. Just past the

second chapel there is a niche in the wall containing the *reliquary of St. Andrew* in delicately worked silver. The entrance to the **sacristy** lies between the third and fourth chapel. This octagonal-shaped room with frescoed ceiling was built in 1786 and houses the Cathedral's treasure. The next door leads to the **Crypt** (see separate section). The right transept with its coffered vault, built in the 13th century, has 18th century paintings by Giuseppe Castellano depicting the *Vocation of St. Andrew and the Miraculous Draught of Fish*. In the middle of the presbytery there is the altar with the sarcoph-



Alongside:
The central nave.
Below: A detail of
a sarcophagus of the
imperial age
with a bas-relief showing
"Il ratto di Proserpina"
(the abduction of Proserpina).

agus of Archbishop Pietro Capuano (1360). **The main altar** was built by Giuseppe and Paolo Mozzetti between 1711 and 1712 and contains pieces of marble from an ancient altar in the Abbazia di S.Maria e S.Vito (Abbey of St. Mary and St. Vitus) in Positano. In 1715 the artist dell'Asta painted the *Martyrdom of St. Andrew*, which clearly stands out on the altar, as well as the frescoes in the apsidal bowl-shaped vault depicting *St. Andrew*, *The Assumption* and *St. John the Baptist*. The two side pulpits, built in the 17th century, were made using the mosaic tiles from an old 12th century ambo. From the transept, walking past the five chapels in the left aisle, one after the other, visitors can admire the works by Silvestro Mirra and his school (18th century) portraying *St. Eustachius*, *Our Lady of Mercy*, *St. Cajetan of Thiene with St. Andrew* and the *Blessed Virgin*.





In the chapel next to the side entrance on the left there is a red porphyry cistern which was brought from Paestum and used as a baptismal font. In Mediaeval times, the two walled-up doors visible between the chapels led to the Basilica of the Crucifix. In a walnut case beside the side entrance on the left there is a beautiful **mother-of-pearl cross** which was a gift from Monsignor Ercolano Marini to the Church of Amalfi upon his return from the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1930. Higher up is the canvas of the *Miraculous Draught of Fish* painted by the Russian artist Vassilij Necitailov in the 1950's.

The Crypt

Built around 1203 upon the express wishes of Cardinal Pietro Capuano who, on his return from the IV Crusade on 8th May 1208, had the remains of St Andrew transferred there from Constantinople. During the 16th century, the altar and bronze statue of *St. Stephen and St. Laurence* by Michelangelo Naccherino (one of Michelangelo Buonarroti's pupils) were placed around the saint's remains. The cross-vaulted ceiling of the crypt is decorated with frescoes by the Naples school of Baroque. The fresco by Aniello Falcone, painted in 1610, is very significant from a historical-architectural point of view as it commemorates the arrival of St. Andrew's body and is the only reliable reproduction of the ancient Byzantine-Romanic church. Later re-furbishing work was funded by the kings of Spain, and their coats-of-arms, which were fire-branded

on the window panes, can still be seen to-day.

The Chiostro del Paradiso (**Cloister of Paradise**) is reached by turning right upon leaving the Cathedral, going to the end of the atrium and then turning right again, following the narrow pathway.

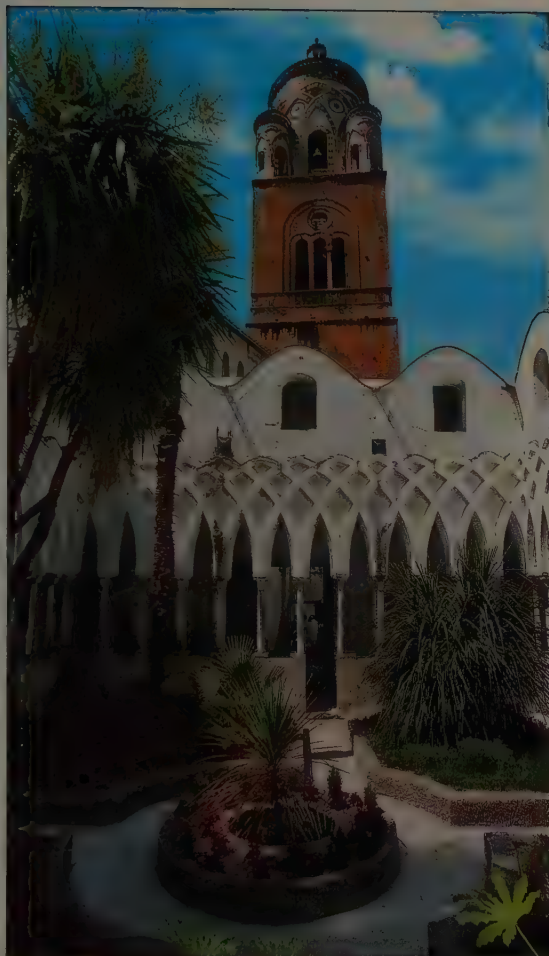
Built in 1268 upon commission by Arch-

Above: the crypt where the remains of Saint Andrew are kept.

Below: the Paradiso cloister.



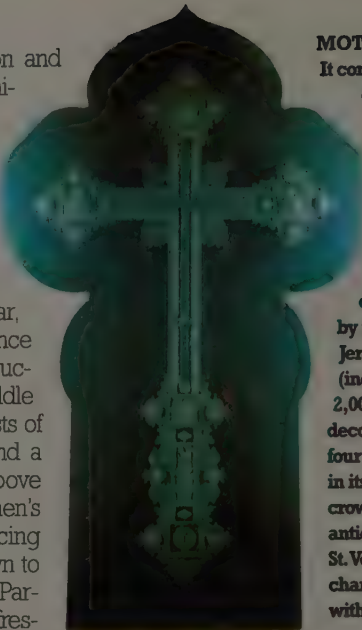
bishop Filippo Augustariccio, it was originally designed as a burial ground for the noble families of Amalfi. In fact, during the Middle Ages, the term "paradise" referred to a graveyard, which very often was adjacent to a church and surrounded by porticoes. The structure consists of a four-sided portico covered by cross vaults and along the outer walls, a series of delicately designed ogival arches which rest on top of pairs of small marble columns with shelf-like capitals. To the right of the entrance, along the south-facing wall, stands the most important of the six chapels in the Cloister, the **Chapel of the Crucifixion**, built between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries. Its internal space is measured out by two longitudinal ogival arches resting on top of a small fluted column. The fresco, which hearkens back to the



school of Giotto, describes **the Crucifixion**: in the foreground the Madonna stands racked with grief, comforted by some pious women. Nearby, below the cross, is Mary Magdalene with St. John. The hooded figures most likely belong to the congregation of the person who commissioned the work. Slightly higher up are the figures of Christ amongst the thieves. An angel in flight supports a newborn baby, representing the passing on of the soul. There are clear anachronisms in the clothing and armour used on the figures. Coming out of the cloister on the left brings you to the Basilica del Crocifisso (**Basilica of the Crucifix**). This is the oldest cathedral in Amalfi, dating back to the 9th century, and was dedicated to Our

On this page: above,
the belfry from the Paradiso Cloister.

Lady of the Assumption and Saints Cosima and Damian. The church was probably designed and built around an original paleochristian structure of which some mutilated columns and capitals remain. It would appear, however, that the entrance portal belonged to a structure from the early Middle Ages. The inside consists of a large central nave and a south-facing nave above which stands the women's gallery. The north-facing nave was knocked down to build the Chiostrò del Paradiso. At present, two frescoed chapels dating between the 13th and 14th centuries stand in its place. The very earliest restoration work was carried out during the 13th century. Later, in the Counter Reform period the old cathedral, now re-named the Cathedral of the Crucifix, was refurbished in Baroque style. Finally, in 1931, the decision was made to completely overhaul the building, a 60-year undertaking, during which time the



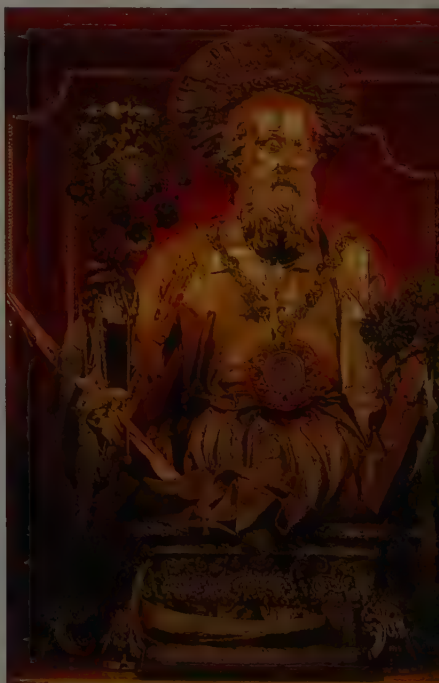
MOTHER-OF-PEARL-CROSS.
It comes from Jerusalem and was donated to the Archbishop Ercolano Marini and the Mayor Francesco Gargano in 1930, on the occasion of their visit to that city. The donation was made as a gesture of thanksgiving for the many charitable works performed by the people of Amalfi in Jerusalem in the Middle Ages (including the foundation of a 2,000-bed hospital). The cross is decorated with images of the four evangelists as its tips, while in its lower arm we may note the crowing of the cock as anticipated by Christ to St. Peter, St. Veronica's kerchief and a charming scene of the Nativity with very small figures.

original Romanic features of the Basilica were restored.

The Diocesan Museum of Sacred Art was set up here to house various archaeological finds, including some from the **Cloister**, as well as a marble sarcophagus dating from Imperial times into which the remains of Archbishop Andrea de Palearea were placed in 1449. His coat-of-arms can be seen in the centre of the urn.



The fourteenth century Crocefissione (Crucifixion) by Roberto d'Oderisio.

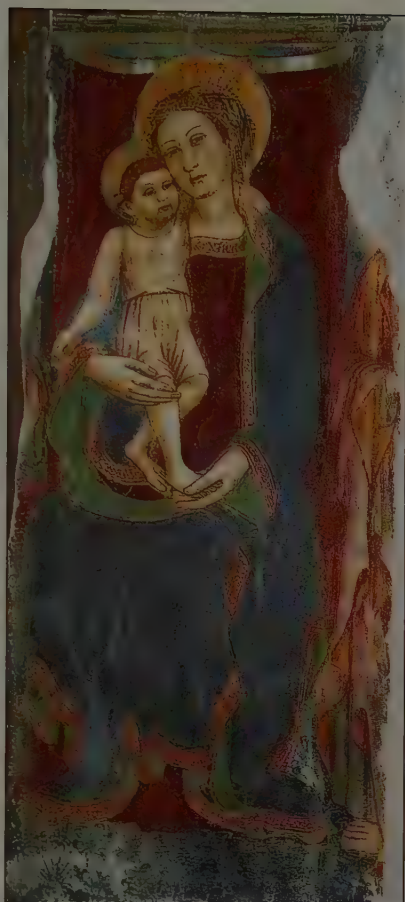


A seventeenth century bust of Sant'Andrea in gold-plated copper.



Above: a detail of the Diocesan Museum in the old Basilica del Crocifisso.

Alongside: fourteenth century "Madonna col Bambino" (Madonna with child).



"Tari" Coins

"Tari" coins were made by the Amalfi people and were reproductions of Arab coins of the same name bearing Kufic inscriptions of a religious nature on both sides. Kufic characters were the oldest of the different types of Arabic writing and originated in Al-Kufa, an important centre of Muslim culture in Iraq. In the south of Italy and Sicily the Normans had already minted coins with these characters, using inscriptions that were often in both Arabic and Latin. The value of the money was based on the quantity of precious metals in the coins. The unit of measurement was the carat which in the Arab system indicated the twenty-fourth part of a denarius and, with respect to gold and silver, the amount of twenty-fourths of the mineral contained in an alloy. The Amalfi coins had 24 carats (12 parts of gold per twenty-fourth) and contained equal parts of gold and silver, with some copper. From the 11th century onwards the Amalfi people minted gold taris as well as the less valuable bronze version. The two sides of the coins, technically known as obverse and reverse, or else capite (heads - the portrait of the monarch) and crux (cross - the symbol of Christianity), were variously historiated. On the obverse side there was often the bust of the Doge Mansone II with a dedicatory inscription, while on the reverse was the image of the harbour and watchtowers guarding over it. The capite of the gold taris bore a globe or the initials of the Doge in power, while the crux had the eight-pointed cross, another distinctive emblem of the city. During the period when Amalfi enjoyed autonomous status these coins circulated throughout the Mediterranean. However, minting ceased by order of Frederick II, who closed the mint in 1220. Examples of taris can still be seen in the British Museum, in the collection of Vittorio Emanuele III and in the Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana (Amalfi Cultural and Heritage Centre).

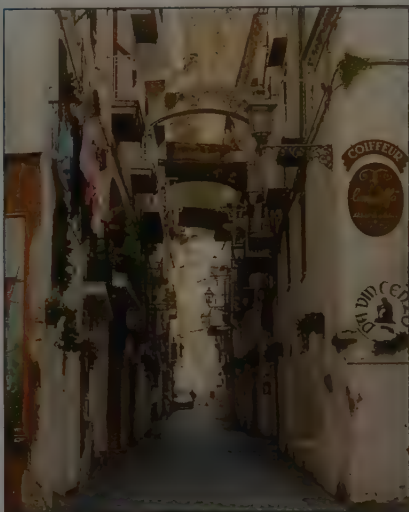


Excursions

Heading up from Piazza Duomo brings you to via *Lorenzo d'Amalfi*, where vestiges of the town's mediaeval past can still be seen. Just before via *Pietro Capuano*, this street forks and you find yourself beneath the archway of the **Supportico Rua** which, in the Middle Ages, was the main thoroughfare for the town. The modern-day main street was built in 1366 on top of the river Canneto, which used to flow in front of the Cathedral. Further ahead lies via *Marino del Giudice* followed by a wide archway above which stands a cluster of houses complete with external stairways, tiny windows and balconies. Beyond this, in Mediaeval times, began the Valle dei



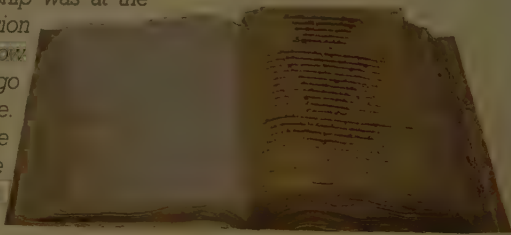
Mulini (*Valley of the Mills*) which was the industrial area of the town. Indeed, the cartiere Cavaliere (*Paper Mill*), which is still fully operational today, can be seen on the left. This street then becomes via



delle Cartiere and a hundred metres ahead we reach the Museo della Carta (**Paper Museum**), which was once a paper mill. The ground floor contains examples of antique instruments and machinery, while on the first floor there is a library of monographies on the history of paper making. Opposite the Museum library there is a **ceramics factory** which uses the same time-honoured production process as the original craftsmen from this coast. On the left

The Amalfi Table (Tabula de Amalpha)

The Table constitutes one of the oldest documents of navigation law which, from the 11th to the 17th century, was a flawless legal reference work for the sailors and merchants who earned their living from the sea. It consists of 66 articles or chapters, the oldest of which - approximately 23 in number - are in Latin, while the most recent are in Italian. The table clearly conveys the complexity of the relationships between the ship owners and merchants, crews and public institutions. It was essentially the agreement or, to use the Latin term, *societas maris*, drawn up between ship owners and crew, regulating the services to be performed. This not only provided for proportional profit sharing but also guaranteed social security benefits for crew members injured at work. Furthermore, when a ship was at the mercy of a sea storm, the decision whether or not to throw overboard all or part of its cargo depended on the crew's vote. Lastly, on board each ship were a scribe and a consul whose task it was to arbitrate whenever disputes arose.



hand side, at number 55, stands the Museo della Civiltà Contadina (**Museum of Rural Traditions**) which provides an interesting insight into rural archaeology. The Cartiera Amatruda (**Paper Mill**) to the north of the square is the other fully operational paper mill that was one of the sixteen original mills flourishing in Amalfi in the 12th century when the local people learnt how to make paper from the Arabs. Paper-making reached a peak during the 18th century, but since the end of the last century the entire sector has become slightly obsolete. Following along the river Canneto inland brings you to La Valle dei Mulini (**The Valley of the Mills**) which is an area more suited to hikers than tourists. It is a ravine through which the river winds and is home to a wide variety of animal and plant species, many of which have disappeared in other areas. The very heart of the pass is known as the Valle delle Ferriere (**Valley of the Iron-foundry**), a natural reserve run by the State Foresters' Corps. Special permission is required to visit the reserve,



which covers a total of 455 hectares. Its mild and misty climate has preserved certain pre-Ice Age plant species generally found only in tropical areas, including the small carnivorous plant *pinguicola hirtifolia* and some thermophile ferns such as *woodwardia radicans*.

On the previous page: above, two views of medieval alleys.

On this page: above, an old paper mill, now a museum; below, an old paper mill in the Valle dei Mulini.



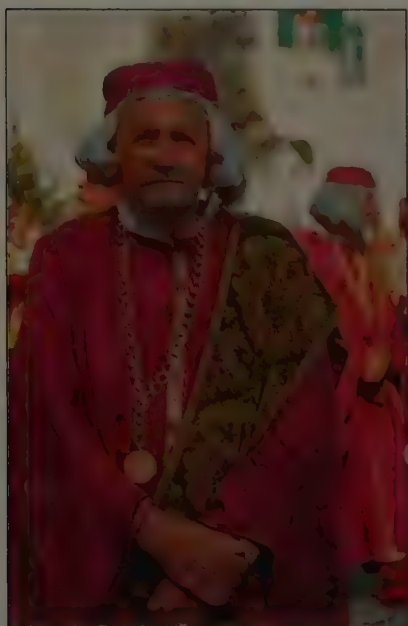


Historical Regatta

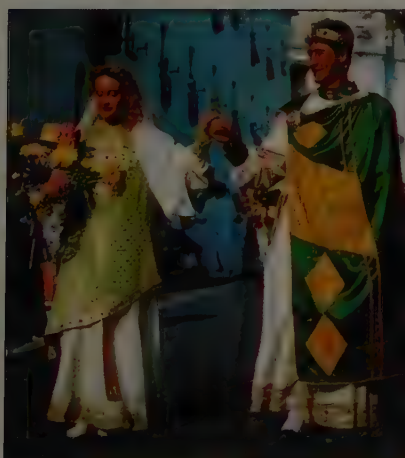
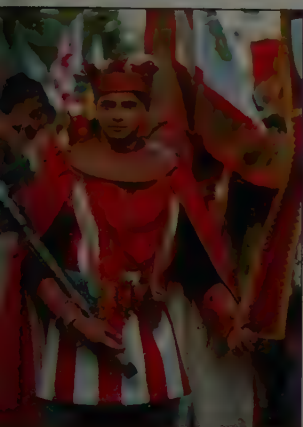
The historical regattá is characteristic: four boats compete in a contest which is meant to recall and rediscover the bat-

ties which were fought long ago in that region.

For a single day, the troubles of every



day life are forgotten so that our mind may go back to those times of glorious splendour. A large crowd of local people and visitors take part, enthusiastically, in the procession which culminates in a marvellous fireworks display and the natural joy of all who are gathered there.



ATRANI

Atrani is separated from Amalfi by a small spur of Mount Aureo which divides the Canneto valley from the Dragone valley. Once a confederate town with Amalfi, its name apparently derived from the Latin *ater-atrum*, i.e. dark due to the shade cast by the leafy slopes towering over it. Ancient chronicles relate that the people of Amalfi and Atrani together used to elect both the Doge and Bishop. Crowned by a sturdy fortified wall to the south and north, Atrani provided solid back-up defence to Amalfi. Many sanctuaries and monasteries were built around this small area and high above, on the west-

ern slope of Mount Aureo, stands the imposing tuff stone colonnade of the Amalfi cemetery built in 1816 on the site of the former Benedictine convent, which had been constructed around the year 980 by Duke Mansone I and dedicated to *St Lorenzo del Piano*.

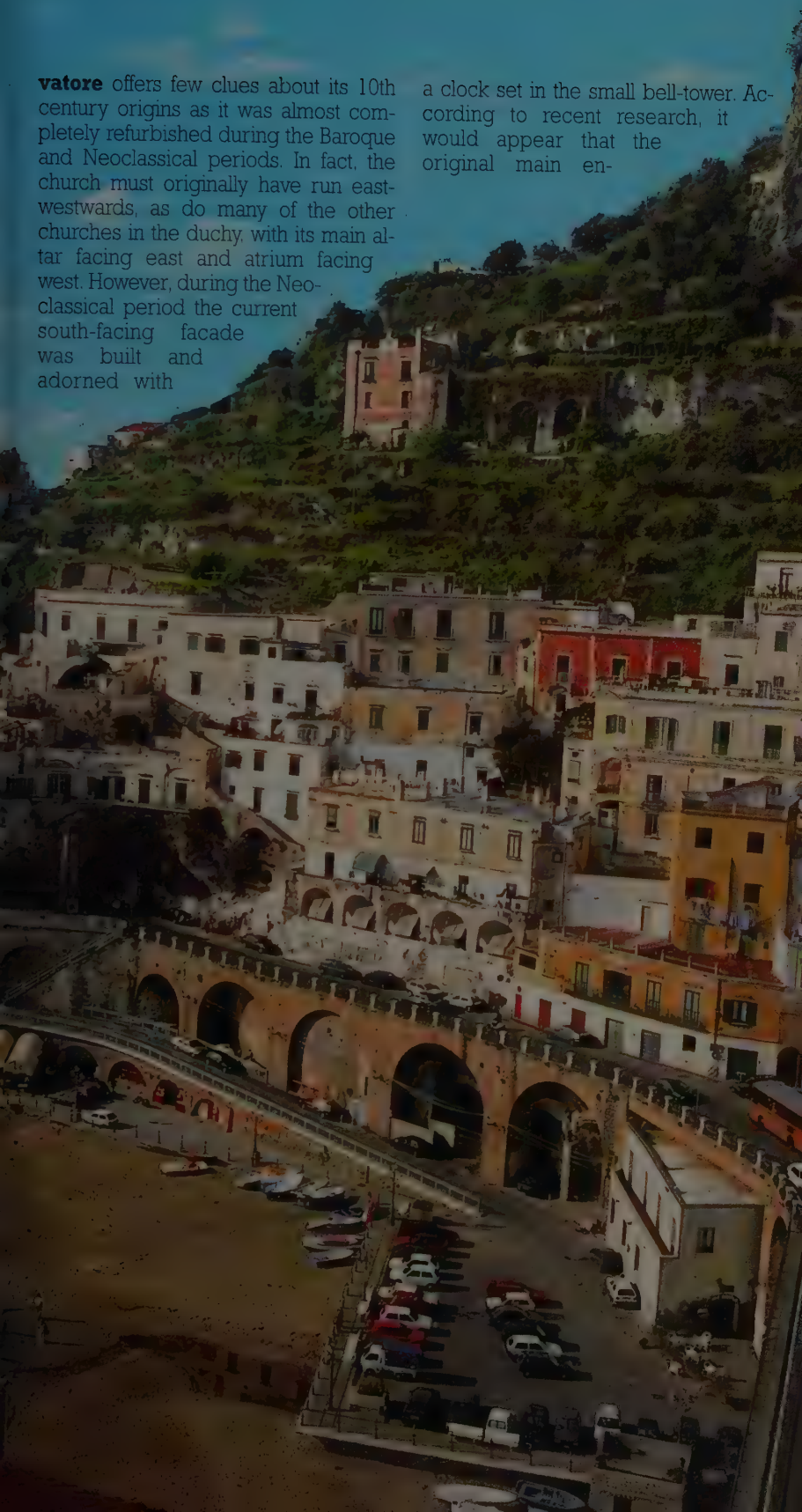
From Piazzale **Spiaggia** the road winds its way up through the town to the square named **Piazza Umberto I** where there is a stone fountain dating from 1927. To the north stands a wide flight of steps opening onto a small 19th century atrium which leads to the churches of the Immacolata (**Immaculate Conception**) and San Salvatore de Birecto (**St Xavier**).

The square-shaped Church of **San Sal-**



vatore offers few clues about its 10th century origins as it was almost completely refurbished during the Baroque and Neoclassical periods. In fact, the church must originally have run east-westwards, as do many of the other churches in the duchy, with its main altar facing east and atrium facing west. However, during the Neoclassical period the current south-facing facade was built and adorned with

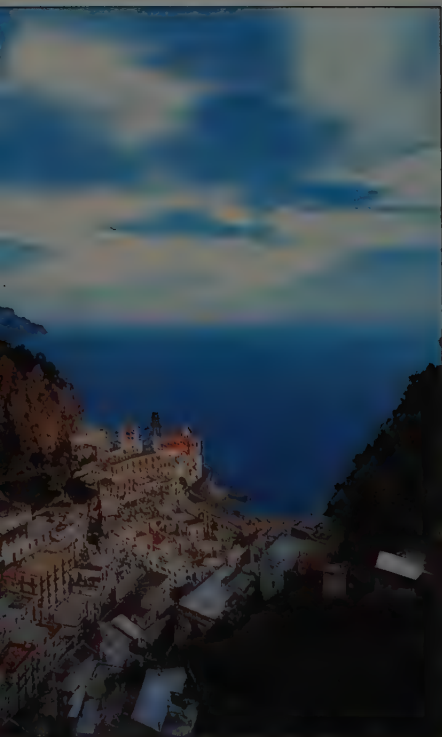
a clock set in the small bell-tower. According to recent research, it would appear that the original main en-





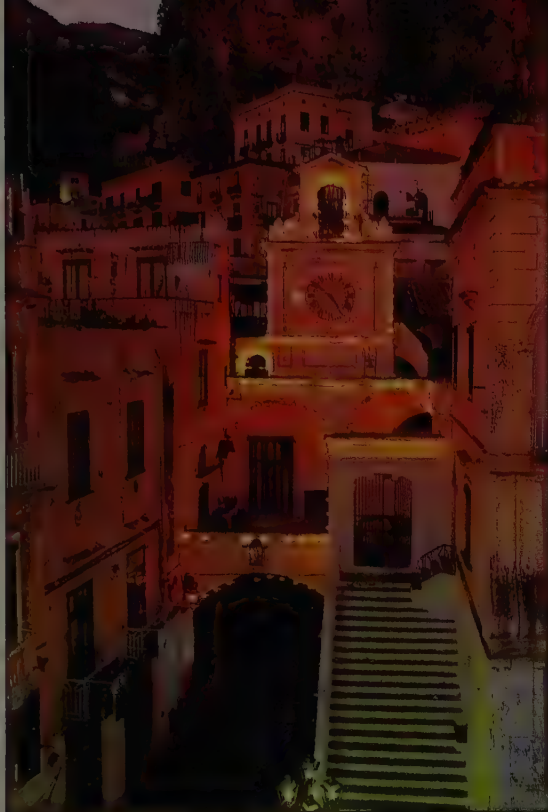
A view by night.

A panorama.



trance was in *via Arte delle Lana* which, today, is the secondary entrance. The church played a fundamental role as a Palatine chapel in which the crowning ceremonies of the **Dukes of Amalfi** took place.

The bronze door, made in 1087 and a gift from the wealthy merchant Pantaleone Viarecta, and the marble pluteus are of particular artistic interest. The former, which is currently housed in the collegiate of Santa Maria Maddalena (St. Mary Madgalene), consists of inlay work depicting Christ, the Madonna, St. Sebastian and St. Pantaleone, the patron saint of the donor. The pluteus, which was sculpted towards the end of the 11th century, consists of two peacocks separated by a tree on which a bird seems to be perched; the peacock on the left is standing above a female bust flanked by two mermaids while the other one is spreading its tail above a hare in the clutches of two birds of prey. We then move on to the nearby Chiesa dell'Immacolata (**Church of the Immac-**



The Collegiate church of Santa Maria Maddalena.



An aerial view.

ulate Conception). Inside there is a single rectangular nave with a longitudinal barrel-vaulted ceiling, two stucco-work cross vaults and neoclassical decorations. The small chapel on the right dedicated to St. Anne dates from the

last century. The main altar, made from multi-coloured marble, faces westwards in contrast to the original medi-aeval layout and there is a Roman cinerary urn set in the wall of the tiny sacristy to the right.

RAVELLO

Perched high up on the rocky spur separating the Valle del Dragone from the Valle del Reginna, Ravello commands a spectacular view over a large stretch of the Coastline. Although one of the Amalfi chronicles states that Ravello dates back to the second Gothic war, the first historically reliable references mention a town which, in the 9th century, gravitated around Amalfi. Although it shared the fate of the glorious republic, Ravello, too, had its own golden years of prosperity. Like the town of Scala, its location was carefully chosen as it was

high up, difficult to reach and thus easily defended. It is no surprise that from the very beginning the town boasted a sturdy line of fortification. Scala and Ravello were the last bulwarks of the Duchy of Amalfi before the Norman conquest. Later on, the resistance shown by the inhabitants of Ravello against the Pisan besiegers in 1135 was so valiant that they successfully held out until the Normans arrived and defeated the invaders. The total destruction of the Duchy of Amalfi, however, was only postponed for two years until the Pisans launched a second and much fiercer attack during which they finally achieved their aims. The numerous civic and religious constructions in the characteristic style of this



Coast still testify to the wealth and opulence of the merchant families of Ravello.

The Rufolo, Rogadei, Muscettola and Confalone families filled the town with valuable works of art. It was no chance occurrence that Saint Bernard of Chiaravalle counted the town "among the most important and noble cities in the Kingdom of Naples". In spite of the excesses of the Baroque style, the characteristics of Mediaeval art are still visible and, thanks to recent restoration work, have finally been brought to light. Many years after the town's heyday, during which sea trade brought great wealth, Ravello was rediscovered by a variety of writers and artists who, between the 18th and 19th centuries, chose it as one

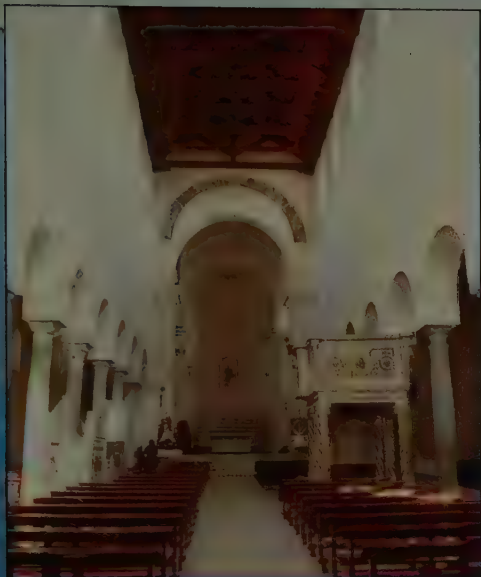
of their key destinations on their Grand Tour of southern Italy. Here, Richard Wagner found the inspiration for important compositions, and, every year, against the backdrop of the splendid Villa Rufolo, the Wagner concerts pay homage to the famous composer. The entire town is almost a monument in itself which satisfies even the least curious of tourists: a simple stroll along the streets and alleyways reveals a little gem full of churches, chapels and noblemen's residences, in addition to the traditional-style dwellings of this spectacular coast. Several buildings are worth describing in detail: the Cathedral, Villa Rufolo, Villa Cimbrone, the churches of San Giovanni del Tauro and Santa Maria a Gradillo.





Street Plan of Ravello

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| ① Pay car park | ④ Pharmacy |
| ② Taxi rank | ⑤ Public baths |
| ③ Traffic police station | ⑥ Petrol station |



The interior of the Cathedral of Ravello.

nunziata



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- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 7 Cathedral museum | 11 Tennis courts |
| 8 Tourist Office | 12 Public garden |
| 9 Post office | 13 Piazza Fontana Moresca |
| 10 Public telephones | 14 Belvedere "Principessa di Piemonte" |

The Cathedral

One credible version holds that this church was founded by the Benedictine monk, Orso Papico, towards the end of the 11th century. The diocese of Ravello, formally established in 1086, was amalgamated with the dio-

Muscettola; it was made by Barisano da Trani and has 54 panels with sacred and profane decorations. This innovative relief technique, obtained by moulding as opposed to engraving, was typical of Byzantine art. The inte-



The façade of the Cathedral.

cese of Scala in 1603 and ultimately incorporated into Amalfi's during the last century. Very little remains of the original facade: only the mullioned window with two lights above the central entrance and a few other decorative features offer some clues about its original design. A four-columned portico with a flight of steps running off to either side was destroyed at the end of the 18th century. The only memory of this can be found in the descriptions by a few scholars of bygone years. The three-storey bell-tower with its characteristic interweaving arch decoration dates from the 12th century. The design of both the cathedral and the bell-tower is similar to that of the Abbey of Montecassino. The *bronze door*, dating from 1179, was a gift to the cathedral from Sergio

rior of the Cathedral, designed in the style of a basilica, with a nave, two aisles and transept, underwent the most Baroque alterations. Restoration work carried out in 1973 brought to light the original decorations which had lain hidden underneath 17th century stucco work. The aisle on the right has some fragments of a fresco which was the original wall decoration. To the left of the central aisle stands the solid marble *ambone dell'epistola* (the epistle ambo) which is entirely decorated with mosaic tesseras depicting, amongst other things, two peacocks underneath the lectern, and the famous scene of the prophet Jonah being swallowed by the whale and coming back out alive, symbolising resurrection. This work, which is Byzantine in origin, was a gift



The pulpit by Nicola di Bartolomeo da Foggia in 1272.

from Constantino Rogadeo, the Bishop of Ravello, during the first half of the 12th century. To the right of the nave there is the *ambone del Vangelo* (*Gospel ambo*) made by Nicola di Bartolomeo of Foggia. In keeping with the main stylistic trends of the 12th-13th centuries, this ambo stands on six mosaic-decorated spiral columns which rest on the backs of six lions.

The mosaic decorations on the pulpit are both geometric and naturalistic in inspiration. Another spiral column stands at the front of the lectern and supports a capital with an eagle on top. Its talons are clutching a book where the first words of St. John's Gospel can be read - IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBUM. The Madonna and Child mosaic facing the entrance to the church is clearly influenced by the Byzantine style. The Rufolo family's coat-of-arms can be seen on one side of the ambo, and the bas-relief portraits on the lintel of the small door to the pulpit

in all likelihood depict Nicola Rufolo and his wife Sigilgaida. A bust, probably of this well-known noblewoman, was kept above this door until 1973, when it was removed as it was not thought to be its original location. At present, it is housed along with numerous other finds in the small *museum* in the crypt underneath the church. Two paintings hanging in the transept, one depicting St Michael the Archangel and the other the martyrdom of St. Pantaleone, can be ascribed to the culture of the counter-reform: the former, which hangs on the right-hand side, was painted in 1583 by Angelo D'Amato from nearby Maiori; the latter, on the left-hand side by the altar dedicated to St Pantaleone, was completed by Girolamo Imperiali in the first half of the 17th century. The niche below this painting houses the reliquary of the saint's blood which, quite amazingly, liquefies every year on the

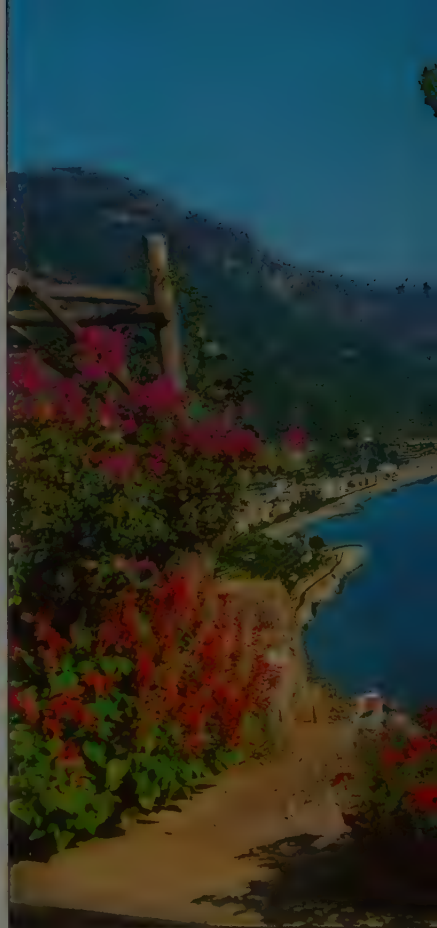
27th July, the day
he was martyred.



The bronze door by Barisano da Trani in 1179.

Villa Rufolo

This villa belonged to one of the most important families of Ravello's Mediaeval aristocracy and is an especially fascinating work of architecture because of its admirable symbiosis between nature and art. Certain scholars hold that Nicola Rufolo had it built when Charles I of Anjou was King of Naples (1266-1285). A thick-growing climbing plant tenaciously clings on to the roughly hewn stone of the *entrance tower*. The small arches around the upper part of the structure are surmounted by coupled clay columns which would suggest that originally there were similar decorations all over the building. The ogival archway leads to the vestibule whose domed ceiling and walls decorated with intertwining arches are vaguely reminiscent of an Arab mosque. Here too, we find some decorative sculptural work, the remainder of the ancient bas-reliefs that once adorned the villa. Walking up the cypress-lined driveway brings us to a *palazzo* which was once the living quarters of the villa. Although the construction differs from the original design, thanks to the combined action of time and weather, not to mention the modifications made by the various owners, what the visitor sees gives a clear idea of the primitive beauty of the original design. The *13th century cloister* is reached by passing through an archway supported by columns and capitals. The play of light and shade created by the columns of the portico and the splendid arabesque which decorates the walls



make the cloister a particularly fine example of Moorish-style architecture. The structure formerly rested on 10 large marble columns on the ground floor, but following the collapse of part of the loggia, they had to be raised up by means of roughly-hewn reinforcements during the 18th century which,

The terrace where concerts of Wagner's music are held every year.





paradoxically, add to their original beauty. The garden, set on two levels, lies in the shadow of the main tower next to the palazzo which, because of its proximity to the entrance tower, played a more important defence role. The upper part of the garden has a square-shaped well surrounded by white columns, terracotta amphorae and family crests, as well as the ruins of a construction known as the Sala dei Cavalieri (*Hall of the Knights*) thus named for its resemblance to the entrance vestibule; directly below, there is an ancient bathroom and the drawing room of the palazzo. The garden, which now, as in the past, looks out over one of the most strikingly beautiful views of the coastline, is alive with the brilliant colours of the flowerbeds and the tinkling of water from various fountains. On 26th May 1880, the composer Ricard Wagner wrote in the visitors' book that "the enchanted garden of Klingsor has been found", as here, he had finally stumbled upon the inspiration for his opera "Parsifal".

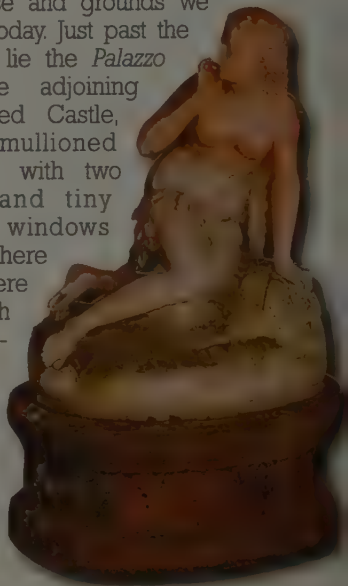
Above: view over Capo d'Orso from the terrace of Villa Rufolo.
Below: the fourteenth century Torre Maggiore.



Villa Cimbrone

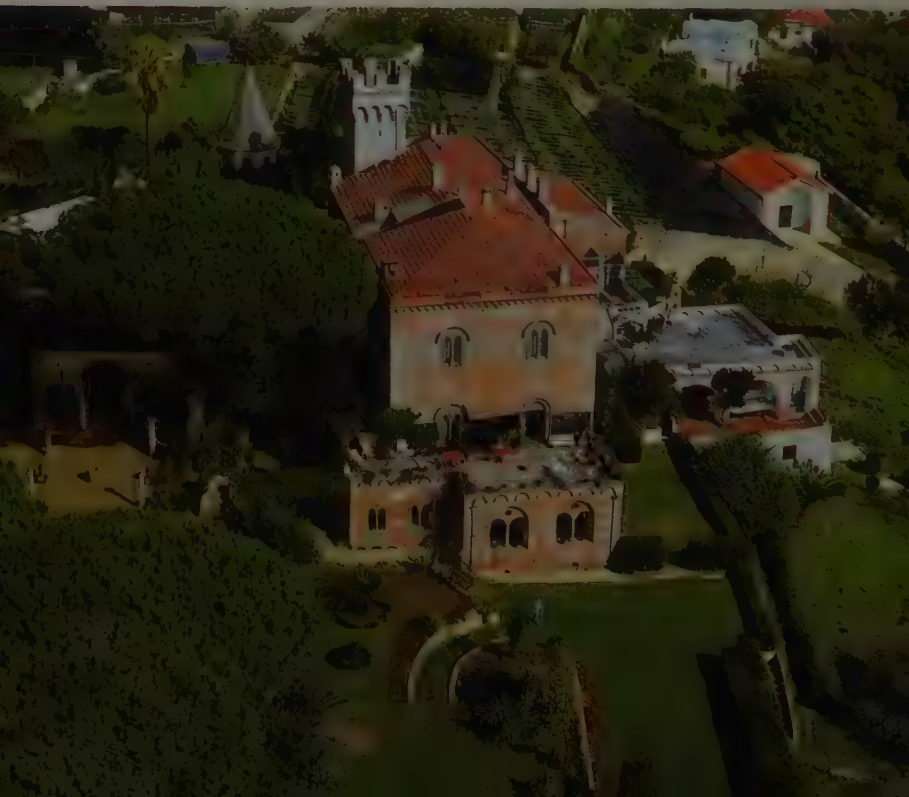
The estate on which the villa stands - always known as "Cimbronium" - used to belong to the noble family Accongiaio-co. It was subsequently bought by the Fusco family who kept it for many centuries until financial difficulties forced a descendant to sell it to the Amici family from Atrani. At the end of the last century the house and grounds were divided into two parts because of an inheritance dispute. The "Cimbronium" then only consisted of a farm, a vineyard, a walnut orchard and some tree-covered land. Although the grounds in themselves were intrinsically beautiful, there was absolutely nothing of artistic interest. In 1904, a well-to-do foreigner, Lord Ernest William Bercket, purchased part of the Cimbrone property and the transaction was mediated by a waiter from Ravello, Nicola Mansi. Little by little, Bercket bought the rest of what had once been the original estate and, as a token of his gratitude, asked Mansi to come and live there. The latter gratefully accepted and set about making this country estate become a true rival for the splendours of

Villa Rufolo. Young Mansi took on the role of architect and in the space of a few years set about his various projects. Not only was he gifted with intuitive artistic good taste, the ex-waiter also proved to have great skill and intelligence which, when combined with the considerable sensibility of Lord Bercket, gave birth to the house and grounds we admire today. Just past the gateway lie the *Palazzo* and the adjoining crenellated Castle, where mullioned windows with two lights and tiny arched windows appear here and there through the elegant cut-stone decorations. The famous



Above: a statue of the goddess Venus.

Below: Villa Cimbrone.



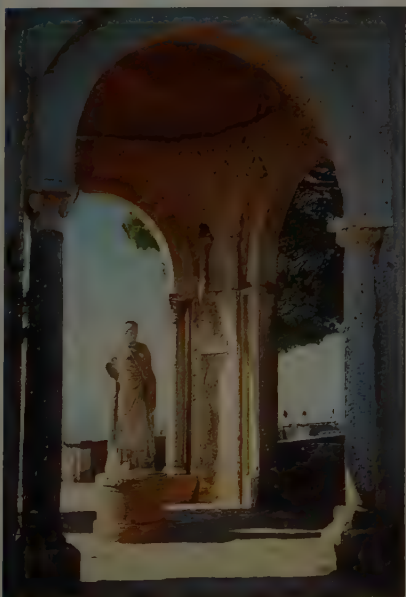


Above: the Terrazza dell'Infinito.
Below, Villa Cimbrone: the cloister.
Below on the right: a small temple with a statue of Ceres.



the "*Rondinaia*" built for Bercket's daughter, Lucilla and perched just like a swallows' nest on the overhanging rock on which the Belvedere stands; the garden, whose marble statues seem like woodland divinities amidst the delightful selection of flowers and plants, as well as fountains and temples; the flower-lined avenue leading up to the *Belvedere* which opens out onto the terrace with a truly breathtaking view of the entire coastline. And last, but not least, the *Belvedere of Mercury*, the *Grotto of Eve* and the *Temple of Bacchus*. When Mansi died in 1949, having already received the Insignia of a commendatore, the press paid homage to a man quite rightly named "The Magician of Villa Cimbrone".

lines in Latin by the poet Terence are carved in stone at the bottom of the tower: "Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto" (I am a man and nothing human is foreign to me). Mansi was inspired by the countless examples of mediaeval beauty throughout Ravello and nothing stylistically foreign appealed to him when designing the other constructions on the grounds. These included the tall, square-based tower, the cloister, which recreates the mystical atmosphere of the 13th century despite being built in 1917; the tea-room, an original rectangular-shaped room clearly inspired by designs in Villa Rufolo; the crypt, a characteristic terraced room whose arches echo countless octagonal-based columns; the little villa known as







Church of San Giovanni del Toro

This church, which was apparently built before the 12th century, presents typically mediaeval features in addition to the numerous alterations made over the centuries, either through necessity or as a result of changing styles. At the side of the main doorway stand two granite columns, all that remain of the four-columned vestibule which collapsed in the early 18th century. The three aisles are separated by four rows of granite columns whose

access room to the small bell-tower. The stucco bas-relief portrait of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria is worth noting. Although it bears no exact date, it is thought to be a 16th century work, as it reflects the canons made popular by Tino di Camaino throughout the Kingdom of Naples during his stay there.

The most valuable work in the church is the *Ambo del Vangelo*

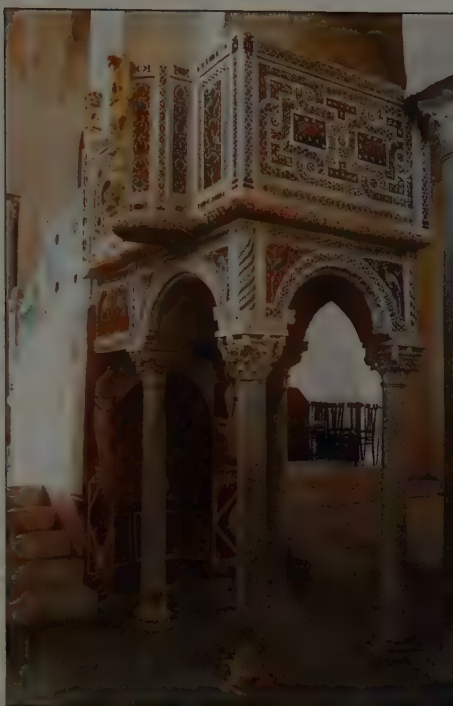


The façade of San Giovanni del Toro.

bases and capitals are similarly constructed. The original dome was higher than the existing one and had to be rebuilt after it collapsed in the 18th century. The large number of frescoes, which had been irreparably damaged, were replaced by Baroque stucco work. The ancient "Cappella del Presepe" (Nativity scene Chapel) belonging to the noble Coppola family was discovered in the

(*Ambo of the Gospel*). This was included in the 1896 edition of the golden book of Italian masterpieces and testifies to the role played by Islam in the development of southern Italy culture during the 11th and 12th centuries. This pulpit was made in the 12th century by Alfano from Termini upon commission by the Bove family, whose coat-of-arms is clearly visible: two bulls surrounded by nine rings of

red, white and blue clover. Small lions form the base for the Egyptian columns which support the pulpit. Finely designed mosaic-adorned arches rise up from the capitals. Mosaic tesseras are also used to decorate the spiral columns and depict brightly coloured birds and geometric arabesques. The lectern rests on a marble eagle clutching a book between its claws. In the tympanums there are characteristic ceramic disks enclosed in circular mosaic-decorated crowns. The column standing on the right is decorated with the figures of three officiating ministers and at the end, the prophet Jonah. Below the pulpit are ancient frescoes of Jesus and Mary Magdalene with other female figures in contemplation. A staircase near the right-hand aisle leads down to the *Crypt*. This hypogean room, lit by means of a mulioned window with one light in each of the three apses, has round cross vaults and there are important 14th century frescoes depicting holy scenes. The frescoed wall is framed by a historiated design of the symbols of the Gospel writers with the holy Lamb in the centre.



Above: XIIIth century pulpit, by Alfano da Termoli.

Below: aerial view of the Monastery and the Church of Santa Chiara.

Other Monuments

The beauty and the history of Ravello are equally visible in other civilian and religious buildings: the *Church of St. Francis* (Chiesa di San Francesco) and adjoining Convent, which was apparently founded by the saint from Assisi; the *Hotel Caruso Belvedere*, once known as "Palazzo d'Afflitto", whose portal contains architectural elements from the *Church of St Eustachius* in Scala; the *Church of Santa Chiara*, mediaeval in origin although rebuilt in the 18th century; the *Town Hall*, formerly the *Casa di Tolla*, which dates from the 11th century; the *Princess of Piedmont belvedere*; the *Hotel Palumbo*, which used to belong to the aristocratic family Sasso; the *Church of St Martin* (Chiesa di San Martino) with its characteristic bell-tower; the *Hotel Parsifal*, formerly the *Convent of*



the Augustinians, built in the 13th century and standing next to the ruins of the *Church of St Augustine* (currently used as a memorial chapel for the war dead and *Palazzo Confalone*, with its 14th century courtyard with pointed arches

SCALA

A natural rise in the landscape, situated 400 metres above sea level, is the rocky site on which the town of Scala was strategically built. According to early reports, it was founded in the 4th century by Romans who had been shipwrecked on their way to Constantinople. This suggests that Scala pre-dates Amalfi, although no historical proof exists to support this theory. However, the one thing which is certain is the function of

Pisans destroyed it completely. In 1210 the armies of Otto of Brunswick attacked, as did the Vespri rebels. Yet the town was not only known for its role in famous battles. Its merchants and craftsmen also played an active part in the development of the maritime republic. From the 11th century onwards, the inhabitants of Scala had established a true and proper business colony in Naples, with a church near Porta Nolana. These men later moved to the



the heights of Scala and Ravello: they were the main fortified bulwarks of the Amalfi territory. An ancient document of Charles II of Anjou speaks of two castles in the Scala area: the first, of which some ruins still exist on a 1,000 metre high peak, was called *castrum Scalae Maioris*, and the other one, whose ruins stand in the village of Pontone, was called *castrum Scalellae*.

When the autonomous status of the Duchy of Amalfi came to an end, the imposing fortress town of Scala was unable to withstand a series of fierce attacks: the Norman, Robert the Guiscard, sacked and burnt the town in 1073, and seventy years later the

rua Scalesia, which still exists in the Pendino neighbourhood. The town became renowned for producing wool, which was still a flourishing trade along the coast in the 17th century, as well as making wooden shoes called "calepodia" after the Greek term.

Now that it no longer needs to defend itself from the outer world, Scala has thrown open its doors to tourists wishing to admire its natural beauty and historical sites.

The town is laid out in typical mediaeval style with decentralised villages. Heading north/southwards visitors pass through *Santa Caterina*, *San Pietro* or *Campoleone*, Cam-

podonico or Campidoglio, Scala, Minuto and lastly Pontone or Puntone. Each village proudly boasts traces of its glorious past. *Santa Caterina* has its church with a nave and two aisles (built from material found in older buildings), the town gate and the nearby chapel of St. Paul or St. Mary of the Gate.

ry bishop's mitre and a wooden crucifix from the same period. *Minuto* is home to a Romanic church, the Chiesa



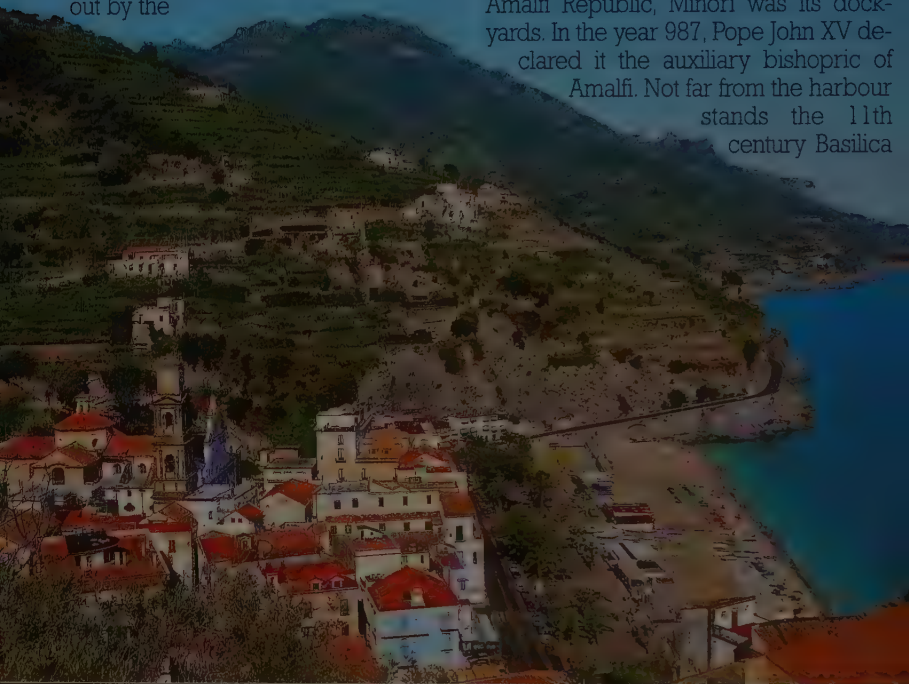
Campoleone has the Church of St Peter with its sculptures and commemorative stones dating from Angevin times (in fact, the church was originally called Sant'Angelo dello Spedale after a hospital founded there in 1320). *Campodonico* boasts the Church of San Giovanni Battista dell'Acqua with its characteristic Moorish-style bell-tower. In *Scala* there is a cathedral which, despite major refurbishment during the Baroque period, conserves its original mediaeval crypt, in addition to the Angevin tomb of Marinella Ruffolo (made in stucco work upon commission by her husband, Antonio Coppola), a precious 13th centu-

dell'Annunziata, parts of which date from Paleochristian times and *Pontone* has the rather sad looking ruins of Sant Eustachio and the churches of San Filippo Neri, San Giovanni Battista and Santa Maria del Carmine. Several other civilian buildings offer interesting clues about mediaeval architecture along the Amalfi Coast, even though we are limited to what is left of the original structures, as is the case of the house belonging to the noble family Sasso (whose most famous member was Brother Gerardo, the founder of the Ordine degli Spedalieri) and the houses of the Mansi-D'Amelio, Bonito and Campanile families.

MINORI

Minori is located in the middle of an 'indentation' in the coastline between Capo d'Orso and Conca dei Marini. The town developed and extended along the valley hollowed out by the

Reginuolo stream, which in mediaeval documents was referred to as *Rheginna Minor*, possibly from the Greek *rhgnumi* (*rhégnyimi*) meaning flow into or burst forth. During the golden years of the Amalfi Republic, Minori was its dockyards. In the year 987, Pope John XV declared it the auxiliary bishopric of Amalfi. Not far from the harbour stands the 11th century Basilica



of Santa Trofimena, which was completely refurbished in the last century.

The crypt, restored in 1722, contains the remains of the saint.

Above: view of Minori.

Alongside: the exterior and interior of the Basilica of Santa Trofimena.

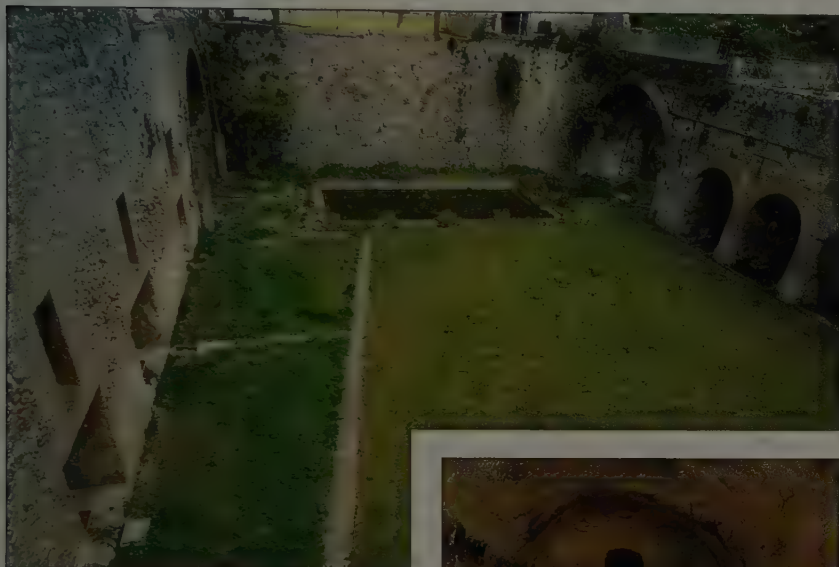
The Roman villa

The few archaeological ruins in the area would suggest that not many people lived in the town before the social war (91-89 B.C.). Thus it must have been an *ager publicus* (a state territory), mostly covered by wood-

land. During the early Imperial Age, the areas near the shore were developed and luxury dwellings and self-sufficient farms were built. Indeed, large *dolia* (wide bellied vases for storing foodstuffs) were found in this

villa, indicating that it must also have had a farm annex. The sea provided the easiest way to reach the town as the only alternative in the past was through the Chiunzi pass, which con-

top of brickwork piers. In the middle there is a swimming pool, beside which stands the nymphaeum leading to the various rooms, some with original domical vaults. Lastly, there



Above: a courtyard with porticoes and pool.

Alongside: a mosaic floor in the spa area.

sisted of steep mule tracks that proved highly impractical during bad weather. The modern-day trunk road 163 was not dug out of the rock face until the last century.

Discovered by chance in 1932, the villa was excavated in 1934 and re-excavated after it was completely buried by detritus in the terrible flood of 1954. At the time of its construction it gave directly onto the sea, which in those days came further inland than it does today. It is not particularly well conserved due to water filtration and also because until recently, many rooms were used as cellars or, worse still, as somewhere to slake the lime used to build the nearby houses. The villa was particularly large (approximately 3,000 square metres) but unfortunately only the living area on the ground floor has survived.

At present, visitors enter by means of a flight of steps leading to the *peristilium* (veranda) which is surrounded by arches made from blocks set on



is the *tablinum* (main room where the family received their guests), the *caldarium* (the hot bath room) and the *music and theatre rooms* with decorations of swans, masks and musical instruments.

The villa dates from the period of Augustus (1st century A.D.) and was almost certainly owned by a high-ranking citizen who led a very active social life, as evidenced by the variety and wealth of the rooms, and also by the remains of a highly efficient system of wall heaters which channelled the hot water from the swimming pool in such a way that it kept the rooms warm during cold weather.

MAIORI

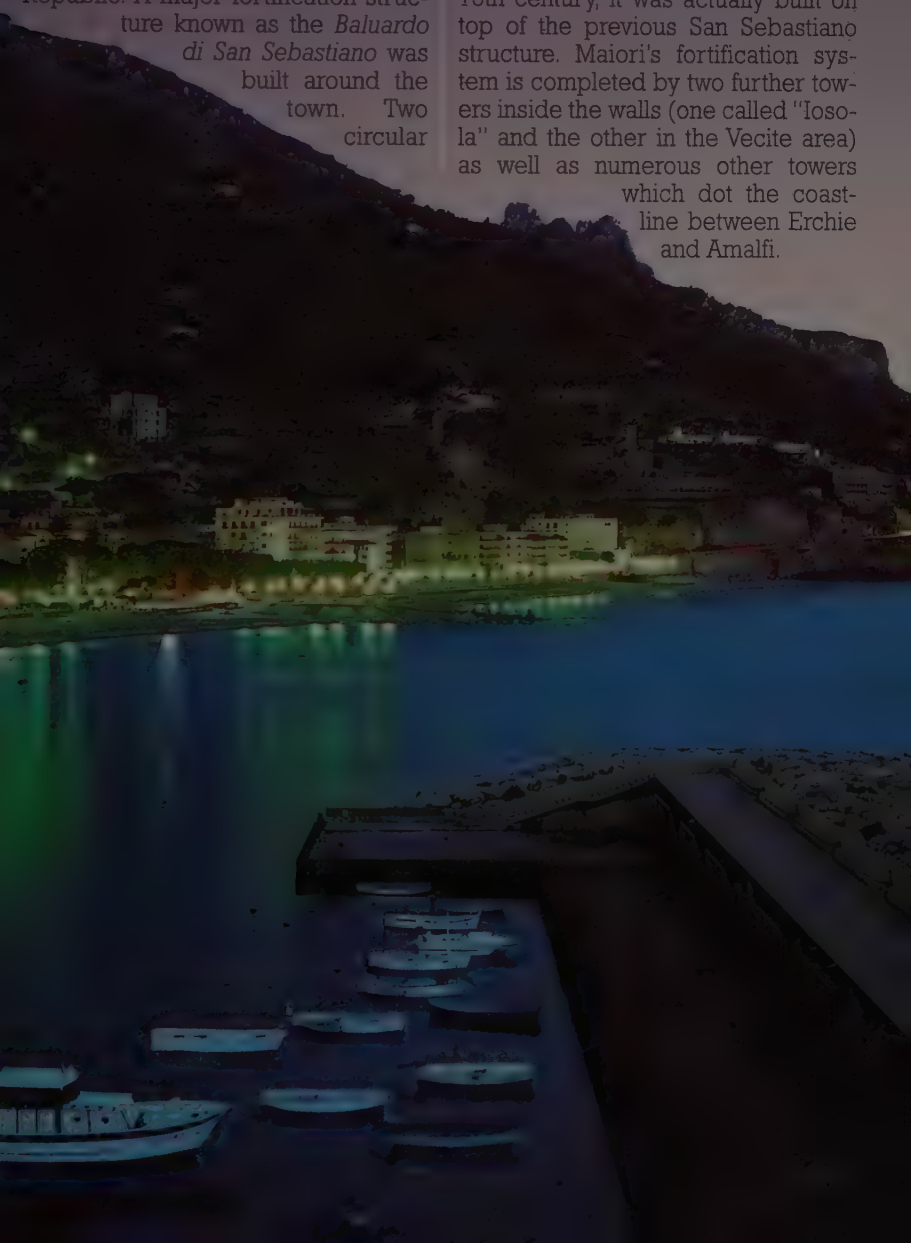
As the wide valley of Tramonti nears the sea, it opens out to form the area where the town of Maiori was built. Two bastion-like hills - the *Brusario* to the east and the *Fronzuti* or *Torina* to the west - stand on either side of the pebbly beach. The Maiori coastline, about 10 kilometres long, stretches between Minori to the west and Cetara to the east, and the town itself extends inland

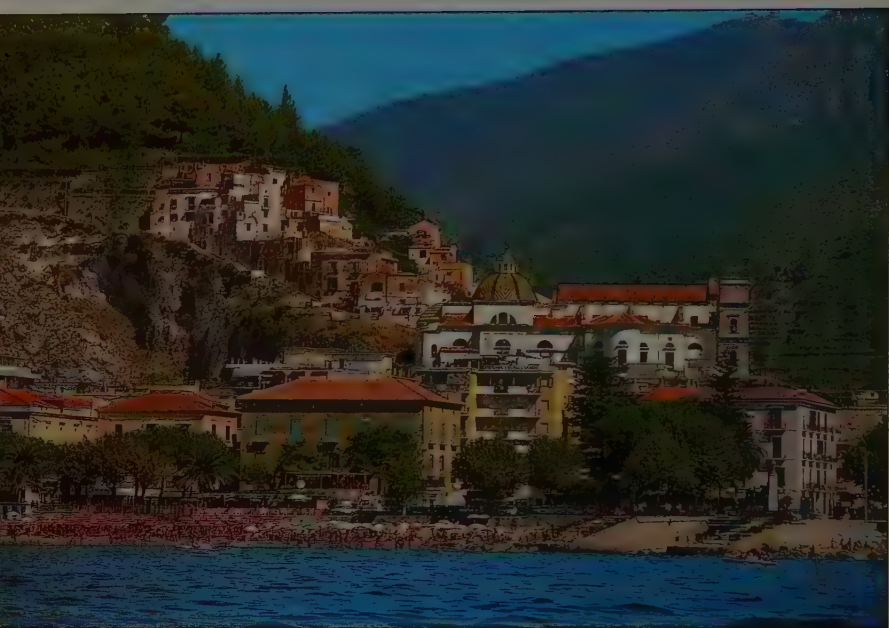
as far as Tramonti. According to one theory, Maiori used to be called Reginna after the name of the stream running through it; it was then decided to call the town "Maior" (hence the modern-day Maiori) to distinguish it from the neighbouring "*Reginna Minor*" (Minori) where the stream known locally as *Reginuolo*



flows. Certain scholars believe that the toponym Reginna may be Etruscan in origin, as it lies fairly close to Marcina, the Etruscan town which is almost definitely the predecessor of modern-day Vietri sul Mare. However no archaeological evidence has been found to support this theory. Situated very near the border of the Lombard territory of Salerno, Maiori was part of the confederative agreement made during the Middle Ages sanctioning the birth of the Amalfi Republic. A major fortification structure known as the *Baluardo di San Sebastiano* was built around the town. Two circular

towers (one called "Mandina" and another in the Barizzo area) and the ruins of a crenellated wall structure inside the town are all that is left of it today. It also included the *Rocca di Sant'Angelo*, of which nothing remains, and the *Castle of San Nicola di Troplano*, which rises up majestically from the hill of the same name, just behind the San Pietro neighbourhood. Although some documents attribute the construction of this castle to the Piccolomini family during the 15th century, it was actually built on top of the previous San Sebastiano structure. Maiori's fortification system is completed by two further towers inside the walls (one called "Iosola" and the other in the Vecite area) as well as numerous other towers which dot the coastline between Erchie and Amalfi.



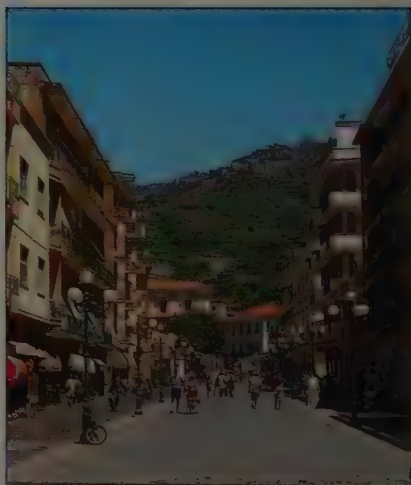


Among the religious buildings, the following are worth particular mention: the *Abbey of Santa Maria de Olearia* which was built inside a grotto towards the end of the 10th century; the *Collegiate Church of Santa Maria a Mare* named after a wooden icon originally found in the sea, and the *Sanctuary and Grotta dell'Avvocata*, which stands approximately 900 metres above sea level in the shade of the impressive Mount Falesio.

Above: a view showing the Collegiate church of Santa Maria a Mare.

Alongside: Corso Regina.

Below: an aerial view of the beach.



THE ABBEY OF ST. MARIA DE OLEARIA

Known as "Olearia" because of the surrounding olive trees, The Abbey of St Mary is set in a naturally formed cavern near the Capodorso promontory and was chosen by a certain Pietro as a hermitage in the late 10th century. Given the number of converts who had gathered together in this area, when Pietro died, his nephew, Giovanni, established a Benedictine convent there. The name of the first abbot was Tauro and his

early Mediaeval painting in Campania, dating somewhere between the 11th and 12th centuries. Although there is some disagreement over dates, all experts agree that the crypt is the oldest of the three rooms. The style of painting there would appear to pre-date the Byzantine-style artistic innovations of the abbot Desiderio of Montecassino. Reconstruction work carried out in the wake of natural disasters (e.g. the devastating flood in 1954) and the con-



tombstone is still conserved there. In the 11th century, St. Mary of Olearia was taken over by the Abbey of the Most Holy Trinity of Cava de' Tirreni (Abbazia della Santissima Trinità). The last abbot died in 1509; in 1580 the coenoby (abbey) was abolished by Pope Gregory XII and abandoned, although at a later stage it was used as a country residence.

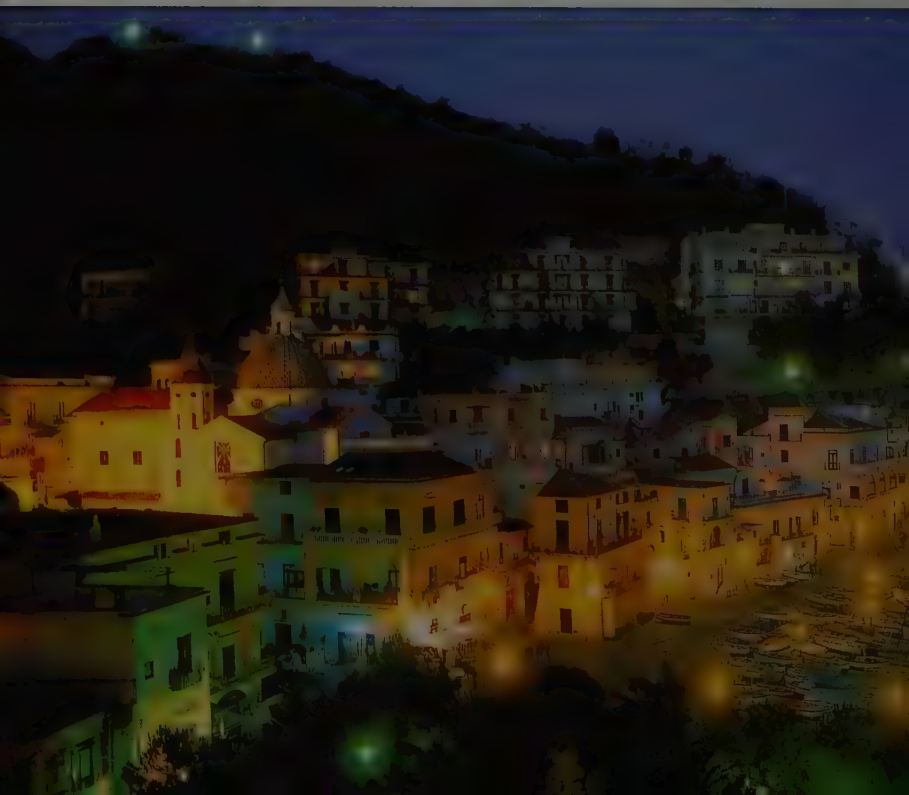
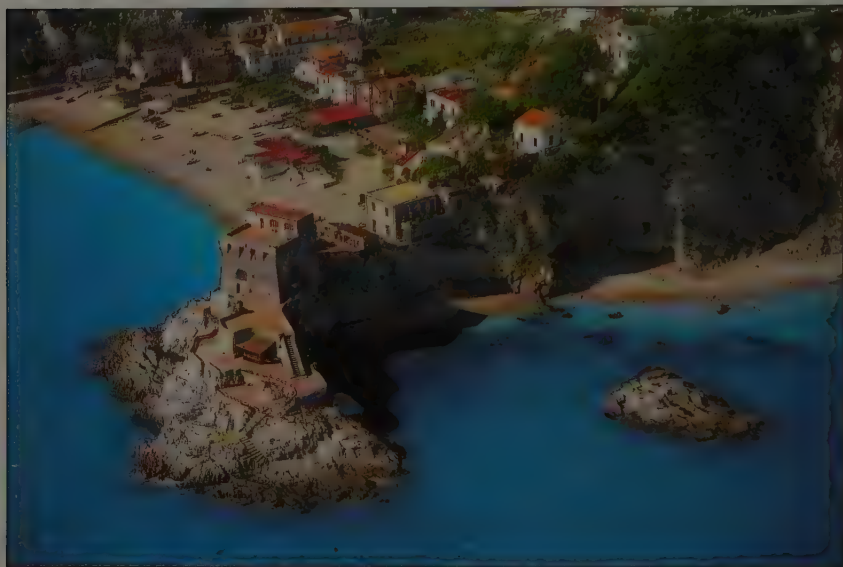
There are three separate rooms: the crypt, the main chapel and the chapel of San Nicola (St. Nicholas). The simple construction of the three levels exemplifies the humility of these monks/hermits. The abbey is an important building because of its wall frescoes, which are a rare example of

struction boom of the last few decades have lent a decidedly modern look to Maiori not quite in keeping with the architectural style of the Coastline. To get a look at the more authentic aspects of the town, it is best to visit the neighbourhoods further inland, near the surrounding hills, where the old houses still bear testimony to the picturesque traditional architecture and lemon groves provide a lovely backdrop to the overall scene. The entire area has so much to offer, both along the coast itself - with its creeks, grottoes, towers and promontories - and the panoramic nature trails which wind their way through the mountains nearby.

ERCHIE

About 9 kilometres after Maiori, heading towards Salerno, lies the little fishing village of Erchie. Inhabited by just a few hundred people, it is a much-loved bathing resort during the summer months. The village

is delightfully set in a picturesque spot and offers an attractive beach area which to the east is enclosed by a rocky spur where an ancient watchtower still stands today.



CETARA

The small town of Cetara, situated on the coastline between Maiori and Vietri sul Mare, is renowned for its highly developed fishing traditions. The houses here all seem to willfully lean towards the sea; the smell of processed an-

chovies wafts through the town and the harbour is always full of fishing boats. The name Cetara in all likelihood comes from the Latin word *cetaria*, which was the name of the ancient tuna-fishing boats. The town extends around the Church of *San Pietro* (St.

Peter) with its characteristic 13th century bell-tower and mullioned windows with two lights. Lying at the eastern-most corner of the Republic of Amalfi, Cetara bordered on the Lombard territory of Salerno. Chronicles relate two episodes of the town being occupied by the Moors: the first one by the Saracens in the year 879, and the second by the Turk, Sinàn Bassà, in 1551. Living proof of the town's past battles can be found in the ancient tower, which consists of two separate constructions: one is cylinder-

shaped and dates from the Angevin period, while the other is square in design and was built during the latter half of the 16th century. Cetara was jointly administered by Maiori and Cava dei Tirreni until 1883 when it became an autonomous municipality.

Today, the quaint beauty of this town, which appears like a miniature mountainside carving, comes under seige by hordes of tourists at various times of the year.



On the following page, above:
the Erchie marina.

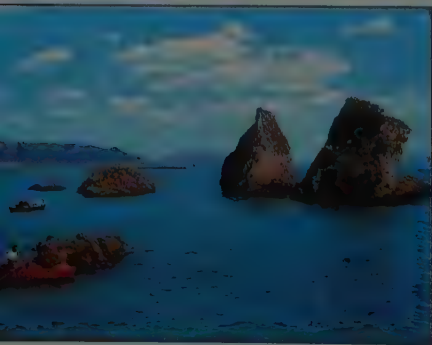
Alongside: a night view of the town around the church of San Pietro.

On this page, above: the port of Cetara.

VIETRI SUL MARE

Vietri sul Mare is the nearest town on the Amalfi Coast to the city of Salerno. The Bonea stream divides the town into two areas: one that extends to the westernmost borders of Cetara and part of Cava dei Tirreni, and the other to the east, bordering on Salerno and the rest of Cava dei Tirreni. It only obtained independence from the latter in 1806, and the modern-day municipality now encompasses the villages of Molina, Marina, Raito, Benincasa, Albori and Dragonea, in addition to a few districts such as Fonti. The toponymy of the town shows that the name 'Vietri' derives from the mediaeval word *Veteri*, from the Latin 'vetus' meaning 'old', thus indicating the site of an ancient settlement. Tradition has it that the Etruscan settlement of *Marcina* originally stood here, thus the term *Veteri* would refer to the conglomerate of neighbourhoods successively built over the years. The modern-day town is therefore what was developed on top of the ruins of *Marcina*, which was destroyed by the Vandals led by Genseric. However, the original settlement may even pre-date the Etruscans, if what the historian Stephen of Byzantium maintains is actually true, i.e. that the Ausonian town of *Mamarchina* existed before the Etruscan *Marchina*. Vietri can be linked to *Marchina* not only because of the topographical indications provided by the historian Strabo, but also because tombs and numerous clay-ware objects

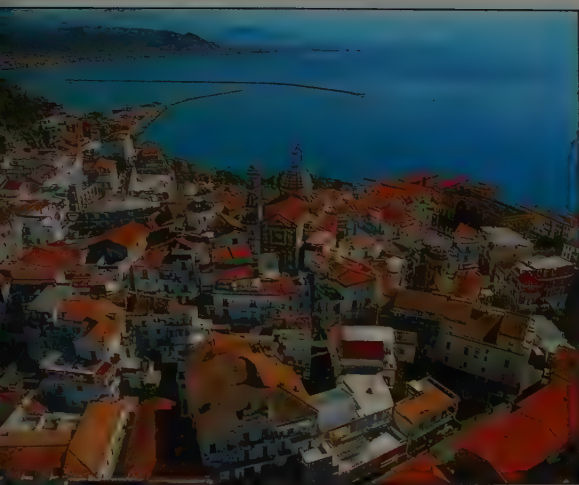
dating from the 6th century B.C. have been found there. Another highly singular find - dating, however, from Roman times - is the central part of a building in *opus reticulatum* lying approximately 15 metres below sea level in the Fonti area. This discovery, along with others, would seem to support the hypothesis that there once was a small city here. If this is not the case, there was at least a major port structure, which now lies buried underwater. Indeed, archaeologist W. Johannowsky believes that in classical times Vietri may have been one of the ports of the powerful city of *Nuceria Alfaterna*. Although the historical reconstruction of Vietri is full of gaps and lacking in concrete evidence, what is certain is that during the Lombard period, it was a suburb of Salerno, or rather a *foria* (foris hanc civitatem salernitanam). Later on in history, it



Above: the cliffs called I due fratelli (The Two Brothers).

On the following page, above: the buildings clustered around the Parish church of San Giovanni Battista. Below: a view of Vietri.





became known as a base for the emerging power of the Benedictine Abbey of the Holy Trinity (Abbazia Benedettina della SS. Trinità) in Cava, which considerably affected its fate. On the whole, it would appear that Vietri has never played a major historical role but gravitated first

around the city of Salerno, then Cava, before finally obtaining administrative autonomy in 1806. At present the local economy is based on tourism and artisan ceramic-ware, as well as the production of tiles on an industrial level.

The town is dominated by the characteristic majolica-tiled dome standing beside the Church of St John the Baptist (Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista). Inside are 16th century paintings of the Madonna and Child, St John and St

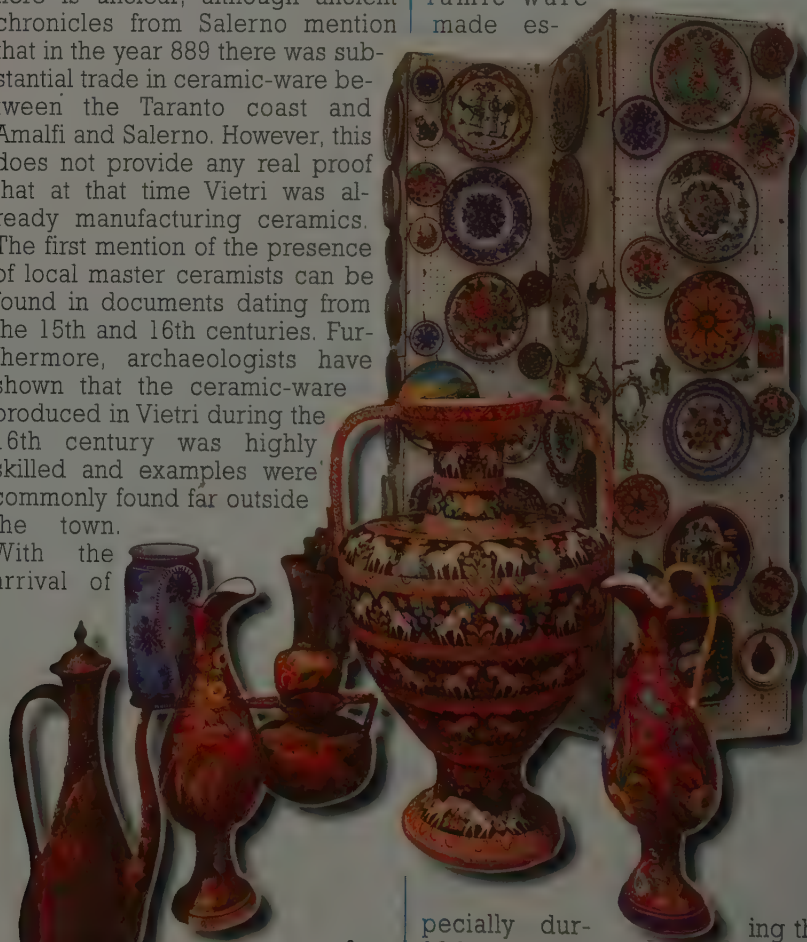
Andrew, and the Deposition of Christ. Down near the sea-front there are three 15th century watchtowers (*Crestarella, Vito Bianchi and Marina di Albori*) which testify to past battles. Nowadays, their only role is to keep a watchful eye over the peaceful invasion of tourists.



THE CERAMICS MUSEUM OF VIETRI

The Belvedere Tower (Torre del Belvedere) of Villa Guariglia in the village of Raito has been the permanent home of the Ceramics Museum of Vietri since 9th May 1981. The exact reason why this craft became popular here is unclear, although ancient chronicles from Salerno mention that in the year 889 there was substantial trade in ceramic-ware between the Taranto coast and Amalfi and Salerno. However, this does not provide any real proof that at that time Vietri was already manufacturing ceramics. The first mention of the presence of local master ceramists can be found in documents dating from the 15th and 16th centuries. Furthermore, archaeologists have shown that the ceramic-ware produced in Vietri during the 16th century was highly skilled and examples were commonly found far outside the town. With the arrival of

influences in Vietri ceramic-ware given that around the same time as the supposed arrival of the Abruzzo ceramists there is also mention of craftsmen from Naples in Raito. The term 'roba siciliana' (literally, Sicilian stuff) refers to the very basic ceramic-ware made es-



crafts-
men from the

Abruzzo region in the 18th century, the local ceramics industry was supposedly given a new breath of life. This theory, which not everyone agrees on, concerns the old votive tiles to be found throughout the town that date from the same period. It is not always easy to distinguish the various

pecially dur- ing the
19th century which
was exported in bulk to Sicily.
As the different quality of clay in
Sicily was ill-suited to certain ce-
ramics, the ceramic-ware from Vi-
etri was much appreciated.
At times ceramists abandoned the
naive local designs in favour of a
touch of cutting irony, whilst still
maintaining the usual popular pro-
duction style.

The Coastal Towers

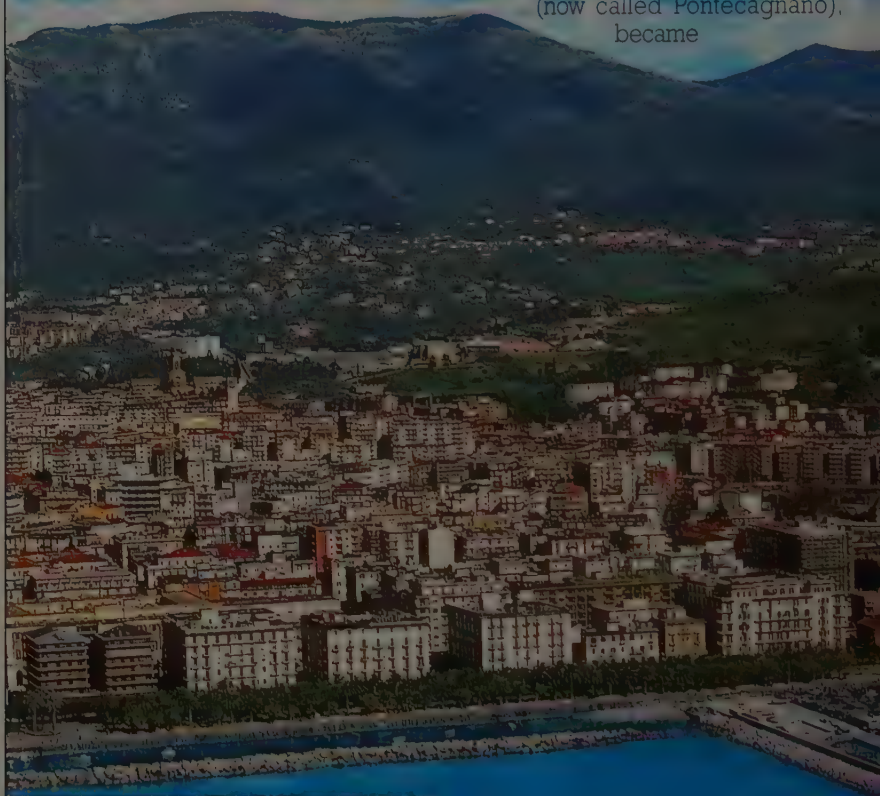
Maiori's coastal defence system was made up of seven towers. Built from local limestone, they embody the typical characteristics of 16th century square-shaped design with four to five embrasures on the upper coping and barrel or cross vaulted ceilings. Apart from the towers at Capo Tummolo and Lama del Cane, which are merely ruins, all the others have been completely restored and made into luxury accommodation. The 'Torre Normanna' (Norman Tower) has even been turned into a restaurant-night club. Moving from Erchie towards Amalfi, the towers are named as follows: Erchie, Capo Tummolo, Lama del Cane, Badia, Cesare, Normanna and Mezzo Capo.



SALERNO

Although archaeological data attest to the presence of a pre-Roman settlement here, the first historically reliable information about the city of Salerno describes a Roman colony which was specially fortified in 194 B.C. to control the hostile Picentines

who were allies of Hannibal from Carthage. These people, originally from the modern-day Marches region, had been deported in 268 B.C. to the territory lying between the rivers Irno and Sele which even today is known as 'Agro Picentino'. Their main city, Picentia (now called Pontecagnano), became



increasingly less important to the definite advantage of Salerno, which had been set against them by the Romans. Loyalty to Rome proved fatal for Salernum in 89 B.C. and it was sacked by Papilius Mutilus during the social war. After the fall of the western Roman Empire, the city remained under the influence of the Byzantines, except during the latter's brief battle with the Goths (535 - 553 A.D.). With the arrival of the Lombards, Salerno first became part of the Duchy of Benevento and when the latter was divided up into two separate States, it became the

capital of the principality which was given the same name. From a strategic point of view, it is understandable why the Lombards chose this coastal city as a capital as they fully intended to take over important sea trade routes from Amalfi (which was still under Byzantine dominion). Indeed, it was during this period that various attacks were made on the future Maritime Republic. Amalfi succeeded in fending off Arechi in the year 785, but did not have the same success with Sicardo in 838. However, it eventually re-



Above: aerial view.
Below: the Cathedral,
the promenade at Trieste
and Via Ligea.



Above: the crypt of the Cathedral.
Below: Dolphin Fountain in
Piazza Sedile del Campo.

established itself and set up its own autonomous government, paving the way for its golden years. In the 9th century, Salerno had to contend with incursions by the Cetara-based Saracens who were determined to destroy all the surrounding areas. They were finally thwarted thanks to the helping hand of Emperor Ludovic II. The development of Salerno continued not only under the alternating reign of the local Princes, but also under the dominion of the Normans, following the conquest of the city by Roberto the Guiscard. The year 1419 marks the beginning of the period of feudalism: the city was granted as a fief to illustrious local families - the Colonnas, Orsinis and Sanseverinos - who turned it into a large and important State.

The most important events in the city's history over the last few centuries include its joining the Republic of Naples in 1799 and the landing of the allied troops in 1943.

Today, Salerno is the main administrative centre of one of the largest provinces in Italy. It has become an important tourist destination not only because of its proximity to the spectacular Amalfi Coast (all

buses leave from here), but also because of its interesting historical centre. In the very heart of the city stands the Cathedral (Duomo) which was built by the Normans in the latter half of the 11th century. Although 18th century restructuring work has altered its original appearance, this is one of the most famous monuments in the south of Italy. Just before the entrance to the cathedral proper there is a splendid portico and mul-tioned window with five lights. The bronze portal bears the date 1099 and was cast in Constantinople. The inside, with its nave and two aisles, still conserves numerous vestiges of its past, such as mosaics and Roman or mediaeval sarcophaguses, despite the obvious Baroque transformations. The beautiful 12th century ambos situated at the top of the nave are worth particular attention. Next door to the cathedral there is a Museum which houses numerous works of art spanning the 13th and 18th centuries, a parchment of the Exultet with 14th century miniatures, and a 13th century antependium which has 64 ivory carvings illustrating the Holy Scriptures.

The *Provincial Museum* (Museo Provinciale) stands behind the Cathedral and contains a wide selection of archaeological finds unearthed in the area. It is well worth making the trek to visit the *Arechi Castle* to enjoy the splendid view. This fortification stands at the top of the hill which was once called 'Bonadies', or 'Good Day', as it is possible to see the sun rise over the entire gulf from here.

A stay in the city would not be complete without a shopping trip along the main pedestrian area (Corso) or a leisurely stroll along the promenade (Lungomare) where the city folk, old and young alike, meet for a chat.



FOOD & WINES

The local cuisine is mainly Neapolitan, and extensively features sea-food. Very sensitive to changes, Amalfi has been able to adapt itself to the new tastes. The food is now lighter, tastier and quicker than before. Amalfi has made good use of its local products, especially the lemon, for preparing dishes such as linguine or spaghetti with lemon, lemon soufflé, lemon cakes. A great variety is offered in the first course rather than



the hors d'oeuvres and the second course. A long experience in dealing with international tourist (even the most exacting) have enriched our menus with delicate dishes such as

pickled anchovies, crespoline with cheese, spaghetti al cartoccio, fish with cognac, tournedos etc.

Fresh cheeses are great. They mainly come from Agerola and Tramonti, namely from high hill pastures. It's not rare to find the famous mozzarella (made from cow buffalo milk). Desserts deserve a special attention, many of them being prepared for each season of the year: the Eastern pastiera, the fruit tart, the almond cakes; the zeppole and the struffoli on Christmas and New Year's Day.

Amalfi's chef art has been able to put to advantage the sea-perfumes, the spices and all the good things required for preparing simple and savoury dishes.

Restaurant's and inns play an important role with their careful and al-

most always customized service. The prices are very acceptable too. Don't leave without buying:

– "passolini", i.e. are raisins baked



and put in lemon leaves bound by a thin red thread;

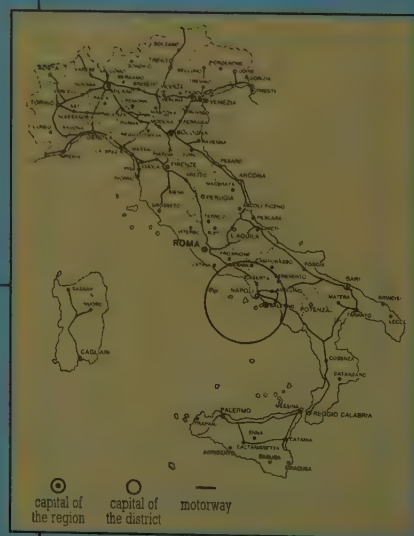
– "piennolo" tomatoes, which are a characteristic ornament of our little balconies and are produced on the Coast. They are dried for a while in cool and airy rooms so that they can replace fresh tomatoes during winter and spring;

– salted anchovies, egg-plants and pepper in oil, prepared in Cetara where they boast a long tradition.

In Amalfi you can try exclusive wines produced in the vicinity (the Ravello, the Furore, the Gragnano) or vintage wines produced in other places in Campania (the wines from Capri and Ischia, the Lacrima



Christi, the Greco from Tufo, the Falerno, the Taurasi, the Fiano, the Solopaca, the Vitulano, the Asprino, the wines from the Flegrei etc.).





Motorways

Fast main roads

National roads and trunk roads

Other roads

Distances in kilometres over the motorways, fast main roads and national roads

Distances in kilometres

Railways, shipping routes

State-boundaries, Region-boundaries, Boundaries of Province

Cable railways, Cabin lifts, Chair lifts

Parks, Caves

Churches, Monuments, Castles

Towers, Ancient monuments or Ruins

Campings, Lighthouses, Airports

Tourist areas

DISTANCE IN KILOMETRES

between the main tourist resorts
of the Sorrento peninsula and
of the coast of Amalfi and ...

NAPLES

AGEROLA	Km. 45	Motorway A3 - SS 366
AMALFI	" 69	SS 163
CASTELLAMMARE DI STABIA	" 32	Motorway A3
ISOLA DI CAPRI	" 30	by sea
MAIORI	" 74	SS 145 - SS 163
MASSA LUBRENSE	" 54	SS 145
META DI SORRENTO	" 45	Motorway A3 - SS 145
MONTE FAITO	" 46	Motorway A3
PIANO DI SORRENTO	" 42	Motorway A3 - SS 145
POMPEI	" 26	Motorway A3
PRAIANO	" 80	Motorway A3 - SS 145 - 163
POSITANO	" 59	Motorway A3 - SS 145 - 163
RAVELLO	" 63	Motorway A3 - SS 145 - 163
SANT'AGNELLO	" 48	Motorway A3 - SS 145
SORRENTO	" 49	Motorway A3 - SS 145
VICO EQUENSE	" 34	Motorway A3 - SS 145

THE MAIN CITIES OF ITALY

	ANCONA	BOLOGNA	BARI	FIRENZE	GENOVA	MILANO	NAPOLI	ROMA	SALERNO	TRIESTE	TORINO	VENEZIA
AGEROLA	456	637	367	552	800	830	45	262	36	931	970	794
AMALFI	573	753	488	650	918	948	69	380	33	1049	1088	912
CASTELLAMMARE	440	619	351	516	784	814	32	246	35	915	953	778
ISOLA DI CAPRI	441	620	352	517	785	815	30	247	73	916	955	779
MAIORI	579	758	490	655	923	953	74	385	20	1034	1093	917
MASSA LUBRENSE	456	644	376	541	809	834	54	271	62	920	979	803
META DI SORRENTO	453	632	264	524	797	827	45	259	40	908	967	791
MONTE FAITO	457	636	368	533	801	831	46	263	51	912	971	795
PIANO DI SORRENTO	453	632	264	524	797	827	42	259	41	913	967	791
POMPEI	434	613	345	510	778	808	26	240	26	889	948	772
PRAIANO	491	670	402	567	835	865	80	297	34	946	1005	829
POSITANO	470	649	381	516	814	844	59	276	41	945	984	880
RAVELLO	442	621	353	518	786	816	63	248	31	917	956	780
SANT'AGNELLO	459	638	370	535	803	833	48	265	53	934	974	797
SORRENTO	460	639	371	536	804	834	49	266	54	935	974	798
VICO EQUENSE	445	624	356	521	789	819	34	252	44	920	959	783

THE MAIN CITIES OF EUROPE

	ATENE	BERLINO	BERNA	BRUXELLES	LONDRA	MADRID	PARIGI	VIENNA
AGEROLA	1141	1982	1194	1846	2154	2205	1666	1348
AMALFI	1259	2100	1312	1964	2272	2324	1784	1463
CASTELLAMMARE	1125	1966	1178	1830	2138	2190	1650	1332
ISOLA DI CAPRI	1126	1967	1179	1831	2139	2191	1651	1333
MAIORI	1264	2105	1317	1969	2277	2329	1789	1471
MASSA LUBRENSE	1150	1991	1203	1855	2163	2215	1675	1357
META DI SORRENTO	1138	1979	1191	1843	2151	2203	1663	1345
MONTE FAITO	1142	1983	1195	1847	2155	2206	1667	1349
PIANO DI SORRENTO	1139	1980	1191	1843	2152	2203	1663	1346
POMPEI	1119	1960	1172	1824	2132	2184	1644	1326
PRAIANO	1173	2017	1229	1881	2189	2241	1701	1383
POSITANO	1155	1996	1208	1860	2168	2220	1680	1362
RAVELLO	1127	1968	1180	1832	2140	2192	1652	1334
SANT'AGNELLO	1144	1985	1197	1849	2157	2209	1669	1351
SORRENTO	1145	1986	1198	1850	2158	2210	1670	1352
VICO EQUENSE	1131	1971	1183	1835	2143	2195	1655	1337



Atrani

€ 6,00

POSITANO THE COAST OF AMALFI



NEW
EDITION



P9-DTM-974

